

**VAIṢṆAVA ĀGAMAS AND VIṢṆU IMAGES
IN
THE GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, CHENNAI**

The Thesis submitted to
University of Madras

For the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
R. Balasubramanian, M.A.
(Part-Time)

Under the guidance and Supervision of
Dr. S. Muthu, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D.
Reader in Sanskrit



Department of Sanskrit
Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College
(Autonomous)
Chennai – 600 004

August 2011

Dr. S. Muthu, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.,
Reader in Sanskrit,
Department of Sanskrit,
RKM Vivekananda College,
Mylapore,
Chennai - 600 004

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled '**Vaiṣṇava Āgamas and Viṣṇu images in the Government Museum, Chennai**' is a bonafide record of research work done by Sri. R. Balasubramanian, M.A., Part-time Research Scholar, RKM Vivekananda College, Chennai, during the period 06-01-2006 to August 2011 under my supervision. It is also certified that the done work has not formed the basis of the award of any degree/Diploma/ associateship/ fellowship or any other similar title to the candidate. This independent research work of the candidate is an original contribution towards the discipline of Sanskrit.

Chennai
25th August 2011

Forwarded
K. Srinivasan
25/8/11
K. SRINIVASAN, M.A., M.D.,
HEAD, DEPT. OF SANSKRIT,
RAMAKRISHNA MISSION,
VIVEKANANDA COLLEGE,
MYLAPORE, CHENNAI - 4.

S. Muthu
25/8/11
(S. MUTHU)

forwarded
S. S. in

PRINCIPAL,
RKM. VIVEKANANDA COLLEGE
MYLAPORE, CHENNAI - 600 004.

R.Balasubramanian,
Part-time Research Scholar,
Department of Sanskrit,
RKM Vivekananda College,
Mylapore,
Chennai 600 004

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled '**Vaiṣṇava Āgamas and Viṣṇu images in the Government Museum, Chennai**' is the record of research done by me during the period from 06-01-2006 to August 2011 and that the thesis has not formed a basis for the award of any degree, Diploma, Associateship, fellowship or any other similar title to me.

Chennai

25th August 2011



(R. BALASUBRAMANIAN)

CONTENTS

Preface	Page vii
List of Illustrations	x
Abbreviations	xiv

CHAPTER

TITLE

I	IMPORTANCE OF MUSEUM AND ITS SCOPE	
	1.1 Concept of Museum	1
	1.2 Aim and Scope	2
	1.3 Brief History of Government Museum, Chennai	3
	1.4 Procurement Method of objects/artefacts	4
	1.5 Exhibition	4
	1.6 Advantages of Exhibition	4
	1.7 Limiting factors related to exhibitions	5
	1.8 Exhibition as an art form	5
II	PRESENTATION	
	2.1 Concept of Presentation	7
	2.2 Display of Stone Sculptures	7
	2.3 Display of Metal Sculptures of Śaivism	9
	2.4 Display of Metal Sculptures of <i>Vaiṣṇavism</i>	10
III	RELEVANCE OF ĀGAMA FOR STUDY OF SCULPTURES	
	3.1 <i>Āgamas</i> in General	12
	3.2 History of <i>Vaiṣṇava Āgamas</i>	12
	3.3 <i>Vaikhānasa Āgamas</i>	13
	a. Brief history of <i>Vaikhānasa</i> system and literature	13
	b. Date of extant <i>Vaikhānasa</i> treatises	15
	3.4 <i>Pāñcarātra Āgamas</i>	19
	a. Meaning and Scope	19
	b. Antiquity of <i>Pāñcarātra Āgamas</i>	23

CHAPTER	TITLE	Page
	c. <i>Pāñcarātra</i> Literature	27
	d. <i>Pāñcarātra Āgama</i> and <i>Dikṣā</i>	30
3.5	Differences between <i>Pāñcarātra</i> and <i>Vaikhānasa</i>	31
3.6	Concept and scope of icon in Early Literature and <i>Vaiṣṇava Āgamas</i>	32
	a. Concept of Icons in Pre-classical literature	33
	b. Concept of Icons in Early literature	35
	c. Concept of Icons in <i>Pāñcarātra Āgamas</i>	38
	d. Concept of Icons in <i>Vaikhānasa Āgamas</i>	40
3.7	Treatises under study	43
IV	ĀGAMAS: ICONOMETRY AND MATERIALS	
4.1	Terminology	44
4.1.1	<i>Hasta</i> and <i>mudrā</i> (hand gestures)	46
4.1.2	<i>Āsanas</i> (Postures and stances)	56
4.1.3	<i>Āyudhas</i> (Attributes) - <i>Cakra</i> , <i>Śaṅkha</i> , <i>Gadā</i> and <i>Padma</i>	59
4.1.4	<i>Ābharaṇa</i> (Ornaments)	68
	a. <i>Karṇabhūṣaṇa</i> (ear-ornaments or earrings)	70
	b. <i>Kaṇṭhābhūṣaṇa</i> and <i>Vakṣobhūṣaṇa</i> (ornaments of neck and chest)	72
	c. <i>Hasta-bhūṣaṇa</i> (Hand ornaments)	74
	d. <i>kaṭi-ābhūṣaṇa</i> (Ornaments of Waist)	78
	e. <i>Pāda-bhūṣaṇa</i> (Ornaments of leg)	79
4.1.5	Garments (<i>Vastra</i>)	80
4.2	<i>Vaiṣṇava Āgamas</i> on Metal Icons (<i>Lohaja / Dhātuja</i>)	81
4.2.1	Metals and Icons	81
4.2.2	Metal combinations and prohibitions	86
4.2.3	Special Renovation Rules for Metal Icons	87
4.2.4	<i>Madhūcchiṣṭa-kriyāvidhi</i> (wax-modeling and metal casting)	91
V	STUDY OF ICONS OF VIṢṆU ACCORDING TO ĀGAMAS	
		98
5.1.	Philosophy of <i>Vaiṣṇava Āgamas</i>	98
5.1.1	Concept of Para and Vyūha in <i>Vaikhānasa Āgamas</i>	98
5.1.2	Concept of Para and Vyūha in <i>Pāñcarātra Āgamas</i>	101
5.2	Types of icons	103
5.2.1	Types of icons in <i>Vaikhānasa Āgamas</i>	104

CHAPTER	TITLE	Page
5.2.2	Stances of the Icons and accompaniment of consorts	108
5.2.3	Types of icons in <i>Pāñcarātra Āgamas</i>	110
5.3	System of measurement in <i>Āgamas</i>	115
5.3.1	Measurement of icons and <i>Tāla</i> system	116
5.3.2	<i>Ṣaṭ māna</i> system of measurements	116
5.3.3	<i>Uttama daśa-tāla</i>	118
5.3.4	<i>Madhyama daśa-tāla</i> (<i>Strī-māna</i> – Female icon)	119
5.4	Comparative measurement of different types of icons	120
VI	METAL ICONS OF GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, CHENNAI	123
6.1	<i>Sthānaka</i> (standing) icons of Viṣṇu	125
6.2	<i>Āsina</i> (seated) icons of Viṣṇu	211
6.3	<i>Sthānaka</i> (standing) icons of Viṣṇu with Consorts	239
6.4	<i>Āsina</i> (seated) icons of Viṣṇu with Consorts	247
VII	CONCLUSION	
7.1	Value of <i>Āgamas</i> in identification of icons of Viṣṇu and iconographical details	253
7.2	Need of <i>Āgamic</i> study for replacement of displaced icons of Viṣṇu	259
7.3	Further scope of study of <i>Āgamic</i> treatises	260
	Bibliography	261

PREFACE

The recent years have witnessed a prolific output of literature on art, architecture and iconography but yet the field remains inexhaustible meriting consideration from different angles and aspects.

We are indeed indebted to T.A.Gopinatha Rao, who, for the first time, in his monograph on Indian Art entitled '*Elements of Hindu Iconography*' presented various interpretations. Following his track, other art-historians such as Dr. J.N. Banerjea, Dr. Champakalakshmi, Dr. Kalpana Desai and Dr. Ratan Parimoo wrote the books on Indian Art. However, their study is based on iconographical details directly concerned with the icons. Gopinatha Rao had consulted in his monograph some āgamic treatises available during his time. For the first time, all *Vaikhānasa* treatises had been extensively studied and analysed with the historical factors (temples and monuments) by Dr. K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan and presented in his work '*A Study of Vaikhānasa Iconography*'. It is with this broad idea as the background; I pursued my research on '*Vaiṣṇava Āgamas and Viṣṇu images in the Government Museum, Chennai.*' It is indeed a tough task to study the icons with reference to the injunctions of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*.

As far as the icons housed in Government Museum, Chennai, my predecessors Dr. F.H. Gravely, T.N. Ramachandran, Dr. C. Sivaramamurti, Prof. P.R. Srinivasan and Dr. V.N. Srinivasa Desikan have contributed very well in this field. However, their presentation requires updating and upgradation in the field of study of icons as and when a number of proofs and material increase. I am indebted to all the pioneers who tried their level best to impart the significance of the icons to public.

The present research work focuses on the detailed and systematic study of metal icons of Viṣṇu housed in the Government Museum, Chennai. Analysis of the metal icons based on iconographical features is very common. However, the canonical texts have been less consulted or not consulted probably there has been no need for that. To understand, realise and study the icons of Viṣṇu in real sense, one must go through *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* which serve as a platform for iconographical and religious studies. Therefore, this study of icons of Viṣṇu is based on the treatises of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*.

The Chapter I (Museum: Its importance and scope) begins with the brief information on the concept and history of Museum in general. The brief history of

Government Museum, Chennai is given in nutshell in addition to the functions of the Museum and the technical features of exhibition.

Chapter II (Presentation) briefs about the concept of presentation in general. This informs the display methods and arrangements of the sculptures (stone and metal) based on thematic principles.

Chapter III (Relevance of *Āgama* for study of sculptures): to understand the basics of icons and icon making, one should always consult technical and religious treatises. As far as the study of icons of Viṣṇu is concerned, the basics of *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, both technical and religious, are briefly analysed as found in them. As the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* are the carriers of *Vedas* and early literature, the concept and scope of icons in all of them are surveyed and substantiated with historical data like inscriptions and monuments in museums and *in situ*.

Chapter IV (*Āgamas*: Iconometry and materials): The term 'iconometry' is taken in the sense of not only metric system i.e. dimensions but also as scientific analysis of the terms used in *āgamas* regarding different features of an icon. This chapter provides all the details of technical terms used in *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* as well as *śilpasastra*. Moreover, this chapter focuses on the contribution of *Āgamas* in the field of creation of metal icons and the techniques involved therein.

Chapter V (Study of icons of Viṣṇu according to *Āgamas*): *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* speak of the five forms of Viṣṇu viz., *Para*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Antaryāmin* and *Arcā*. Among them, *arca* (iconic form) is given much importance in *Āgamic* tradition. However, the basic notions behind the importance of iconic worship are based on the philosophy of *Āgamic* traditions. As such, this chapter begins with the details of the philosophy of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* and concludes with various types of icons, the stances and iconometric details explained therein.

Chapter VI (Metal icons of Government Museum, Chennai) is the core of the present research. This chapter deals with the details of icons of Viṣṇu in four major categories - Standing, seated, standing with consorts and seated with consorts. Each section is sub-classified with reference to attributes (*āyudhas*) and hand poses.

Chapter VII (conclusion) presents in a nutshell the value of the present research work based on analytical approach of the icons with reference to the treatises of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*. This chapter provides details regarding the identification of icons

of Viṣṇu based on the relevant Āgamas for better understanding of the different types of icons (beras). It concludes with the scope of further study of other icons with the help of Āgamic treatises. This research work is value-added with relevant illustrations to substantiate the study.

I have registered for my research work in RKM Vivekananda College, Chennai. In this connection, I express my sincere thanks to the Authorities of the college Swami Atmaghanananda, Former Secretary, Swami Abhiramananda, the present Secretary and the Principal Dr. S. Swaminathan for permitting me to register and proceed with my research work as part-time research scholar. I thank Dr. K. Srinivasan, Professor and Head, Department of Sanskrit, RKM Vivekananda College, Chennai, who has been very much instrumental to have persuaded me to undertake this project.

My Guide and supervisor Dr. S. Muthu, Reader, Department of Sanskrit, RKM Vivekananda College, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004, has given me a free hand to pursue my research. He has also guided me in the nuances of the Āgamas and has gone through the text meticulously suggesting improvements wherever required. I thank him wholeheartedly for all help rendered. I thank the other Doctoral Committee Members Dr. J.R.S. Vasana Ramanan and Dr. S. Padmanabhan for their valuable suggestions and guidance.

I am grateful to the successive Commissioners of Museums of Govt. of Tamil Nadu to have permitted me to register for Ph. D and to use the icons, the photo-archives and other materials housed in Government Museum, Chennai. I wish to record my thanks individually to Dr. R. Kannan, Sri. Siddique, Dr. Shantini Kapoor and Dr. T.S. Sridhar, the former Commissioners of Museums and Sri. S.S. Jawahar, the present Commissioner of Museums. My sincere thanks are also due to all my colleagues in the Museum.

I wish to record my sincere thanks to my friend Dr. K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan who initiated me into the field of Āgamas and went through my script and added critical notes. I am thankful to his family members also especially his nephew K. Sriraman for technical guidelines. I will be failing in my duty if I don't express my gratitude to my friends Sri. K. Muthusamy, Sri. Srikant and Sri. Krishnakant for their valuable and timely support in my research work.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. No.	ILLUSTRATION	GMC Accn. No	Page
1	Stone Gallery - 1		8
2	Stone Gallery - 2		8
3	Śaivite Metal Icons		9
4	Vaiṣṇavite Metal Icons - 1		10
5	Vaiṣṇavite metal Icons - 2		11
6	Vaiṣṇavite Metal Icons - 3		11
7	<i>Garuda-stambha</i> , Vidisa		25
8	<i>Tāla-dhvaja</i> , Vidisa		26
9	<i>Abhaya-hasta</i>		48
10	<i>Varada-hasta</i>		50
11	<i>Kaṭaka-hasta</i>		51
12	<i>Simhakarṇa</i>		52
13	<i>Kartarīmukha</i>		53
14	<i>Kaṭi-hasta</i>		55
15	<i>Ūru-hasta</i>		56
16	<i>Sukhāsana</i>		57
17	<i>Padmāsana</i>		57
18	Viṣṇu, Agaraohai	917/78	125
19	Viṣṇu, Agaraohai, back view	917/78	127
20	Viṣṇu, Locality unknown	4	128
21	Viṣṇu, Locality unknown, back view	4	130
22	Viṣṇu, Locality Unknown	3	132
23	Viṣṇu, Locality Unknown, back view	3	135
24	Viṣṇu, Siddhavazhuvur	625/68	136
25	Viṣṇu, Siddhavazhuvur, back view	625/68	138
26	Viṣṇu, Locality unknown	6	139
27	Viṣṇu, Locality unknown, back view	6	141

Fig. No.	ILLUSTRATION	GMC Accn. No	Page
28	Viṣṇu, Palani	94-5/48	142
29	Viṣṇu, Palani, back view	94-5/48	144
30	Viṣṇu, Elumagalur	254/53	145
31	Viṣṇu, Elumagalur, back view	254/53	148
32	Viṣṇu, Paruttiyur	879/78	149
33	Viṣṇu, Paruttiyur, back view	879/78	150
34	Viṣṇu as Keśava, Avidi	83/44	152
35	Viṣṇu as Keśava, Avidi, back view	83/44	155
36	Viṣṇu as Keśava, Chimakurti	12	156
37	Viṣṇu as Keśava, Chimakurti, back view	12	158
38	Viṣṇu, Siruvattur	79-1/43	159
39	Viṣṇu, Vaduvur Vadapathi	387/57	161
40	Viṣṇu, Vaduvur Vadapathi, back view	387/57	163
41	Viṣṇu, Tiruvonamangalam	449/60	164
42	Viṣṇu, Tiruvonamangalam, back view	449/60	166
43	Viṣṇu, Chidambaranathapuram	549/66	167
44	Viṣṇu, Chidambaranathapuram, back view	549/66	168
45	Viṣṇu, Natham	747/75	170
46	Viṣṇu, Natham, back view	747/75	172
47	Viṣṇu, Munnavalkottai	190/52	173
48	Viṣṇu, Munnavalkottai, back view	190/52	175
49	Viṣṇu, Sirupanaiyur	9	176
50	Viṣṇu, Sirupanaiyur, back view	9	178
51	Viṣṇu, Komal	11	179
52	Viṣṇu, Komal, back view	11	181
53	Viṣṇu, Kilthanjavur	1770/94	182
54	Viṣṇu, Kilthanjavur, back view	1770/94	183
55	Viṣṇu, Andagudi	109/49	185
56	Viṣṇu, Andagudi, back view	109/49	187
57	Viṣṇu, Tiruvelangadu	328/55	188
58	Viṣṇu, Tiruvelangadu, back view	328/55	190
59	Viṣṇu, Kalpattu	473/62	191

Fig. No.	ILLUSTRATION	GMC Accn. No	Page
60	Viṣṇu, Kalpattu, back view	473/62	193
61	Viṣṇu, Mangammalpuram	553/66	194
62	Viṣṇu, Mangammalpuram, back view	553/66	195
63	Viṣṇu, Krishnapuram	574/66	196
64	Viṣṇu, Krishnapuram, back view	574/66	198
65	Viṣṇu, Krishnapuram	569/66	199
66	Viṣṇu, Krishnapuram, back view	569/66	200
67	Visnu, Kargudal	916/78	202
68	Visnu, Kargudal, back view	916/78	203
69	Viṣṇu, Locality Unknown	14	205
70	Viṣṇu, Locality Unknown, back view	14	207
71	Viṣṇu, Locality Unknown, Accn. No.	26	208
72	Viṣṇu, Locality Unknown, back view	26	210
73	Viṣṇu, Pondichery	97/48	211
74	Viṣṇu, Pondichery, back view	97/48	213
75	Viṣṇu, Tirukkannankudi	459/61	214
76	Viṣṇu, Tirukkannankudi, back view	459/61	216
77	Viṣṇu, Mangammalpuram	554/66	217
78	Viṣṇu, Mangammalpuram, back view	554/66	219
79	Viṣṇu, Locality unknown	17	220
80	Viṣṇu, Locality unknown, back view	17	222
81	Viṣṇu, Virudhunagar	5/01	223
82	Viṣṇu, Virudhunagar, back view	5/01	225
83	Viṣṇu, Mangammalpuram	555/66	226
84	Viṣṇu, Mangammalpuram, back view	555/66	228
85	Viṣṇu, Cheranmahadevi	20	229
86	Viṣṇu, Cheranmahadevi, back view	20	231
87	Viṣṇu, Tiruvelangadu	321/54	232
88	Viṣṇu, Tirumarugal	1888/96	234
89	Viṣṇu, Tirumarugal, back view	1888/96	235
90	Viṣṇu, Tiruppuvanam	15	236
91	Viṣṇu, Tiruppuvanam, back view	15	237

Fig. No.	ILLUSTRATION	GMC Accn. No	Page
92	Viṣṇu, Tiruppuvanam, <i>Ratna-nyāsa</i>	15	238
93	Viṣṇu, Tiruppuvanam, <i>Pāda-pīṭha</i>	15	238
94	Viṣṇu with Consorts, Peruntottam	2	239
95	Viṣṇu with Consorts, Srinivasanallur	31	243
96	Viṣṇu, Olayakunnam	503/65	247
97	Viṣṇu, Olayakunnam, back view	503/65	248
98	Viṣṇu with Consorts, Komal	18	250
99	Viṣvaksena, Kulittalai	65/40	257
100	Rāma, Chimakurti	18	258

Photographs/sketches Courtesy:

Fig. Nos. 7 – 17 : K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan

Others : Government Museum, Chennai

ABBREVIATIONS

Accn. No.	Accession Number of GMC
<i>Aniruddha</i>	<i>Aniruddha saṁhitā</i>
<i>Bhārgava</i>	<i>Bhārgava tantra</i>
<i>BCS</i>	<i>Brāhmīya citrakarma-śāstra</i>
<i>BVV</i>	<i>Bravmavidyāvijaya of Mahācārya (Mss)</i>
<i>Chāndogya</i>	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>DHI</i>	<i>Development of Hindu Iconography</i>
<i>EHI</i>	<i>Elements of Hindu Iconography</i>
<i>GMC</i>	Government Museum Chennai
<i>Īśvara</i>	<i>Īśvara saṁhitā</i>
<i>Jayākhya</i>	<i>Jayākhya saṁhitā</i>
<i>KJK</i>	<i>Kāśyapa Jñānakāṇḍa</i>
<i>KLA</i>	<i>Khilādhikāra</i>
<i>KRA</i>	<i>Kriyādhikāra</i>
<i>KSS</i>	<i>Kācyapa śilpa-śāstra</i>
<i>Māna</i>	<i>Mānasāra</i>
<i>Mbh (Ādi)</i>	<i>Mahābhārata (Ādi-parvan)</i>
<i>Mbh (Ānuśāsanika)</i>	<i>Mahābhārata (Ānuśāsanika-parvan)</i>
<i>Mbh (Bhīṣma)</i>	<i>Mbh (Bhīṣma-parvan)</i>
<i>Mbh (Sabhā)</i>	<i>Mahābhārata (Sabhā-parvan)</i>
<i>Mbh (Śānti)</i>	<i>Mbh (Śānti-parvan)</i>
<i>Maitrāyaṇīya</i>	<i>Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>Muṇḍaka</i>	<i>Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad</i>
<i>Nāradiya</i>	<i>Nāradiya saṁhitā</i>
<i>Pādma (Caryā)</i>	<i>Pādma (Caryāpāda)</i>
<i>Pādma (Jñāna)</i>	<i>Pādma (Jñānapāda)</i>
<i>Pādma (Kriyā)</i>	<i>Pādma (Kriyāpāda)</i>

<i>Parama</i>	<i>Parama saṁhitā</i>
<i>Pārameśvara</i>	<i>Pārameśvara saṁhitā</i>
<i>Pauṣkara</i>	<i>Pauṣkara saṁhitā</i>
<i>PRA</i>	<i>Prākīrṇādhikāra</i>
<i>Puruṣottama</i>	<i>Puruṣottama saṁhitā</i>
<i>Rāmāyaṇa (Bāla)</i>	<i>Rāmāyaṇa (Bāla-kāṇḍa)</i>
<i>Ṛk</i>	<i>Ṛk-veda</i>
<i>SAA</i>	<i>Samūrtārcanādhikaraṇa</i>
<i>Sanatkumāra (Brahmarātra)</i>	<i>Sanatkumāra saṁhitā (Brahmarātra).</i>
<i>Śāṇḍilya</i>	<i>Śāṇḍilya saṁhitā</i>
<i>SCS</i>	<i>Sarasvatīya citrakarma-śāstra</i>
<i>SII</i>	<i>South Indian Inscriptions</i>
<i>SKL</i>	<i>Sakalādhikāra</i>
<i>Śrīpraśna</i>	<i>Śrīpraśna saṁhitā</i>
<i>Śvetāśvatara</i>	<i>Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad</i>
<i>VAK</i>	<i>Vīmānārcanākalpa</i>
<i>Vasiṣṭha</i>	<i>Vasiṣṭha saṁhitā</i>
<i>VĀS</i>	<i>Vāsādhikāra</i>
<i>Vāyu</i>	<i>Vāyu saṁhitā</i>
<i>VDP</i>	<i>Viṣṇudharmottara purāṇa</i>
<i>Vihagendra</i>	<i>Vihagendra saṁhitā</i>
<i>Viṣṇutilaka</i>	<i>Viṣṇutilaka saṁhitā</i>
<i>Viśvāmitra</i>	<i>Viśvāmitra saṁhitā</i>
<i>Viṣvaksena</i>	<i>Viṣvaksena saṁhitā</i>
<i>YAJ</i>	<i>Yajñādhikāra</i>

CHAPTER I

IMPORTANCE OF MUSEUM AND ITS SCOPE

1.1. Concept of Museum

The term 'Museum' derived from the Greek word '*muse*' means 'sanctuary of muses' i.e. the Goddesses for learning and art. Hence, the salient quality of the pursuit of learning has been retained by the Museums all over the world in one or the other form. The main motto of the Museum is to collect the objects of art and to help the preservation of culture of a particular region or community in order to present the social and cultural development of mankind by way of exhibitions, temporary or permanent, showcasing the original evidence of human's creative genius and his subjugation of nature.

In real sense, the *stūpas* at Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh) and Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh) are the earliest concrete and immovable Museums in India. In fact, the hemispherical dome of *stūpa* containing the relics of Buddha alone is the object of adoration. The railings around the same are not just enclosure wall but highly informative. From the view-point of analytical research and knowledge, one can notice a number of detailed information carved on them which speak of the social, cultural and religious status of the period they had been created and added.

The temple, representing the cosmos or cosmological order where each single component is part of His unlimited nature, itself is one of the complete museums another being the world in macro level. One can find a number of icons in the temples, with the main one inside the *garbha-grha* and others in surrounding sub-shrines and niches. Obviously, the panel on the external wall of the temples and pillars are the not the object of worship but depictions of the various forms and sportive acts (*līlā*) of the Supreme Being. The icons of the temple reveal the entire historical, social, religio-philosophical back-ground of the same whether the temple is fully extant or only the debris (remnants) is

available. The variety of garments, ornaments, crowns, animals and human forms available in the different parts of the Museum is collectively visible in the temple premises. By visiting the rock-cut and structural temples in different places of India such as Ajanta, Ellora, Mamallapuram, Kancheepuram, Badami and Tanjore, it is absolutely easy to decipher/decode the descriptions found in the vast Indian literature either on *śilpa*, dance or engineering and so on. For instance, the Ajanta paintings, though free-hand rather perfectly iconometrical, stand as the best and earliest concrete record for the detailed ornaments and garments found in the *Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata. The Kailāsanātha temple at Kancheepuram, though dedicated to Lord Śiva, has also *Vaiṣṇava* themes on the internal side of the enclosure wall with a small *gopura*, probably the earliest model. The Rāṣṭrakūṭas followed the same style in the enclosure of the monolithic temple at Ellora as well some of the Lankeśvara (Śaiva) and Daśāvatāra (*Vaiṣṇava*) rock-cut caves.

Sir William Jones, the founding father of the Modern Indian Museum Movement, while inaugurating the Asiatic Society in 1784, commented: “You have realised that I hope, gentlemen, and even anticipated a declaration of my wishes, by your alacrity in laying the foundation of a society for inquiring into the history of antiquities, the national production, art, science and literature of Asia.”

1.2. Aim and Scope

Museums were once thought to be the repositories of art objects and curios. Till last quarter of the nineteenth century, they had collected the material for display and they were stocked as and where they found space. After the Second World War, a considerable change in the attitude of museologist and art connoisseurs became discernible in the display of the materials collected for display. The educational quality of museums has achieved greater importance while the collection and preservation are still retained as basic functions. The original exhibits that have the salient features are carefully presented to the visitors. The museums have to present a coherent

story and their contents, impart direct instructions and induce visitors to learn through viewing. To achieve this goal, the Museums must collect the objects to preserve and interpret them; the aim is to correlate them to modern tendencies and enlighten and entertain the people of the society which they serve.

1.3. Brief History of Government Museum, Chennai

The proposal for a Museum in Madras (presently Chennai) was mooted by the Madras Literary Society in 1846 AD and Sir Henry Pottinger, the then Governor, obtained the sanction of the Court of Directors of the East India Company in London.

Dr. Edward Balfour, Medical Officer of Governor's Body Guard, was appointed as the First Officer-in-Charge of the Government Museum in January 1851 AD. The opening of the Government Museum was announced by a notification of the Fort. St. George Gazetteer dated 29th April, 1851 AD. The Government Museum, then called as the Central Museum, was started in the first floor of the Madras Literary Society College with the 1100 geological specimens. It steadily and gradually developed and expanded under the guidance and supervision of able and successive Directors. The building, in which the then Central Museum was located, was in a dilapidated condition and, hence, the Superintendent of the Museum wanted to shift it to other spacious and strong building.

Then the museum was shifted to a building named the Pantheon, also known as the Public Assembly Rooms, where the elite of the city used to meet. In 1793 AD, the estate of the Pantheon, property of a civil servant and public contractor Hall Plumer, was assigned to a Committee of twentyfour members, which controlled the public amusements in the city at that time. The Committee sold the main house and surrounding space to E.S. Moorat, a wealthy Armenian merchant, who later sold it back to Government for Rs. 28,000/-. The property was originally of 43 acres in extent and stretched from Casa Major Road, flanked by the Pantheon Road and Halls Road.

1.4. Procurement Method of objects/artefacts

In 1878, the Government passed the Treasure Trove Act with the aim to procure the objects. The policy of accepting the materials through gifts was also adopted. Objects and artefacts displayed in the Government Museum, Chennai had been either procured through this Act or through gift. Majority of stone sculptures and bronzes were acquired through the aforesaid act. The objects which were declared 'confiscated' or 'ownerless' by the judiciary were also sent to the Museum.

1.5. Exhibition

Exhibition is an important act of Museum and through this alone a Museum can reach the public. The dictionary defines 'exhibition' as 'showing' and in this sense all the world is an exhibition of one sort or another. However, in the context Museum, 'exhibition' should be defined as 'showing for a purpose,' the purpose being to affect the viewer or visitor in some predetermined way. The possibilities offered by the exhibition as a medium of communication are boundless but limited only by imagination, practical skills, and physical possibilities and, of course, the budget allocation. Undoubtedly exhibition, as medium, has some advantages only.

1.6. Advantages of Exhibition

The most important characteristic feature of a Museum exhibition is that it facilitates an encounter between viewer and the three dimensional object. Other media, such as photograph or a printed book can only portray icons, but they are not the prime and complete source. The exhibition alone provides a direct impact on viewers as it helps them to have contact with real, authentic object and this is what makes the Museum exhibitions so vitally important.

Furthermore, the exhibition is not limited to the size of a screen or a page. It can work at scales appropriate to those of the objects to be shown and facilitate a bridging function so essential to make viewing comfortable on a human scale. Small objects can be given some prominence and positioned in a

way that enables them to view, and larger objects distanced or brought close to heighten visual interest as needs dictate. Bringing the object and viewer closer together is the main function of the Museum exhibitions, and this medium can achieve this in a manner which is safe for both the object (in terms of security and conservation) and the viewer.

By providing a multi-faceted approach, exhibition simultaneously functions at different levels and in different ways. In this manner, a range of aims and objectives can be achieved in a single exhibition by the use of a variety of interpretive materials, and the exhibition can appeal to a wider viewer group made up of different ages, levels of knowledge and intellects. Irrespective of the category of audiences, whom the exhibitions are mainly intended for, there are essential spaces within which visitors can move and progress freely. This has the advantage of enabling them to proceed at their own pace and allowing them to linger on that which interests them and bypass that which does not. Thus, the main feature and important advantage of museum exhibition can be summed up as: the visitor can be provided a very exciting multi-sensory experience with the opportunity of a first-hand encounter with the real object and, hence, the resultant pleasure, entertainment, satisfaction and acquisition of knowledge.

1.7. Limiting factors related to exhibitions

Good exhibitions do not take place easily, nor do they generally come cheap. The production process of a major exhibition is normally complex, extensive resource intensive and it depends on specialists' time and skill.

The space and time are two other pre-requisites, in addition to budget. An exhibition needs to be in place and open for sufficient time to enable it to be viewed by worthwhile number of visitors.

1.8. Exhibition as an art form

Exhibitions are conceived as a sculpture. They are three-dimensional compositions which recognise the importance of solids and voids and strive for

satisfactory spatial relationships. It is the sculpture which people are encouraged not only to look at but also to walk in and explore. Some art is visual; some is tactile; and some may be heard. An exhibition can combine all these. It utilises not just the form and the space but also the shape, colour, light and texture as well, and may be even sound, and indeed, all the basic elements of art and design. It may also utilize iconry and semiotics. Simply combining the various components of a recognised work of art does not necessarily enable others to understand but this, in itself, is not enough. Two additional elements are required. Primarily, there must be an intension on the part of the creator to produce something more than that which will do its job; secondly, there must be originality of thought and creativity to produce something which is quite exceptional, for, the mundane and the ordinary do not qualify as works of art. It is then, for the viewer, to respond in the way they would like.

As far as the Government Museum, Chennai, is concerned, it functions not only just as a Museum but also permanent exhibition of the artefacts/objects within a single roof.

CHAPTER II

PRESENTATION

2.1. Concept of Presentation

Among the religions of the world, Hinduism distinguishes from all other religions by the stress it lays upon and the value it attaches to mūrti worship. It is no wonder to say that scarcely any other branch of antiquities has provided the Indian Archaeologist with more valuable and interesting data than Indian Sculpture.

Art in India was always inseparable from other aspects of life. This is very much evident from the literary and archaeological evidences throughout the history of India. The continuity could be maintained only because the tradition itself had an inbuilt paradigm of facilitating change, constantly adjusting itself to a contemporaneity of time, and place while adhering to certain underlying principles that were perennial and immutable through the ages.

South India is famous for its artistic bronzes and sculptures. The fine features carved on them and the mode of casting are considered the high watermarks of Indian technology and skill. Their faces reflect the mood of the deities realistically. This reflects their modelling perfection. They are the acme of aesthetic perfection.

2.2. Display of Stone Sculptures

The stone sculptures are arranged in two galleries at the new extension gallery and Hindu Sculpture galleries. The sculptures are arranged chronologically in the New extension gallery. It enables the art lovers and fine art students to know the different styles and ornamentation, moods in a single place. The other gallery, i.e. Hindu sculpture gallery they are arranged in thematic like- Śaivite, Vaiṣṇavite, Architectural pieces and so on.



Fig.1. Stone Gallery



Fig.2. Stone Gallery 2

Recently the Hindu Sculpture Gallery was refurbished with pleasing light and the walls were covered with teak-faced planks. One can enjoy the artefacts with pleasing atmosphere.

2.3. Display of Metal Sculptures of Śaivism

In 1963, a separate building was built to house the bronzes. Government museum, Chennai is renowned throughout the world for its archaeological galleries especially the South Indian Bronzes. The ground floor of the then gallery was modelled in running showcases in which on one side the Śaivite bronzes were arranged chronologically and the other side with Vaiṣṇavite bronzes.



Fig.3. Śaivite Metal icons

Subsequently in 2002, during the celebrations to mark the completion of 151 years, the bronze gallery was reorganised. The Śaivite bronzes are arranged thematically on the ground floor. The visitor sees on entry a bronze Naṭarāja dancing.

2.4. Display of Metal Sculptures of *Vaiṣṇavism*

On the mezzanine floor, some of the best Naṭarāja bronzes in the world are arranged on the left side, while the Buddhist and Jain bronzes are placed on the right side. On the first floor, the atmosphere of a South Indian temple is simulated with classical granite pillars and a *garbha-gr̥ha*. A large-sized bronze of Varadarāja with his consorts has been placed here. Some of the most highly-valued *Vaiṣṇavite* icons are arranged here - starting with the icons of Viṣṇu, standing and seated stances, with consorts, Śrīnivāsa with consorts, the *avatāras* (incarnations) like Varāha, Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. The icons of Kṛṣṇa are displayed in the order of Balakṛiṣṇa, Navanītakṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa with consorts.

All these galleries and the facilities have been designed using Computer Aided Design, and, thus, a Virtual Gallery was first created and then translated in physical space in reality.



Fig.4. Vaiṣṇavite Metal Icons - 1



Fig.5. Vaiṣṇavite Metal icons - 2

The display has been modernised with high-tech showcases and illuminated with dichroic halogen lamps offering an excellent visual effect. The showcases on all the three floors look as if they are floating in a pool of light. Proper ventilation, to maintain temperature and humidity, is provided to preserve the bronzes better.



Fig.6. Vaiṣṇavite Metal Icons - 3

CHAPTER III

RELEVENCE OF ĀGAMA FOR STUDY OF SCULPTURES

3.1. Āgamas in General

The term 'Āgama' is generally applied to revealed scriptures and, in practice, it refers to a body of literature of a tradition or school which carries forward the beliefs and practices believed to have come from the Divine Authority. The treatises or writings of such tradition remain as canonical guideline in order to retain the principles and practices irrespective of changing time and social and cultural values but accommodating regional variations and customs as and when required. They are mainly in two categories viz. *Vaidika* and *Avaidika*.

Vaiṣṇava, *Śaiva* and *Śākta* Āgamas are called *Vaidika* and these Āgamas follow the Vedic principles in addition to some special features in the ritualistic customs and practices. *Śaiva* sect includes *Kāpālīka*, *Kālāmukha*, *Pāśupata* and *Siddhānta*. *Siddhānta Śaivism*, generally known as *Āgama Śaivism* and followed in South India, has two divisions viz. *Śiva-bheda* and *Rudra-bheda*, having ten and eighteen treatises respectively. A number of *Upāgamas* are mentioned in the treatises. *Śākta* Āgama is in two divisions viz. *Dakṣiṇācāra* and *Vāmācāra*. The total number of treatises of these sects is enumerated as 64 and 108.

The *Avaidika* traditions which do not accept the authority of Vedas are *Bauddha* and *Jaina*. *Vajrayāna* sect of *Bauddha* Āgama has a vast literature on *Āgamic* and *Tāntric* practices. These treatises almost express the customs and practices of North-eastern part of India, China and Tibet. The same way, *Jaina* sect also has a good collection of treatises.

3.2. History of *Vaiṣṇava* Āgamas

The *Vaiṣṇava* Āgamas are mainly categorized into two viz. *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra*. The treatises on these two branches are less known compared

to *Śaiva* and *Śākta Āgamas*. Both the branches focus on the worship of the Lord Nārāyaṇa but in slightly different modes. It is interesting to note that, though the Supreme One known with his main epithets Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu and Vāsudeva,¹ the *Vaikhānasa* system prefers the term Viṣṇu to other terms whereas the *Pāñcarātra* prefers the term Vāsudeva.

The terms *bhāgavata*, *paramabhāgavata*, *bhagavatpādānudhyāta* and *atyantabhagavadbhakta* found in the inscription of Pravarasena-II and Skandagupta and in a copperplate grant of Prabhāvatigupta, daughter of Candragupta-II, etc. stand as witness for the prevalence of the *Vaiṣṇava* cult, either of *Pāñcarātra* or *Vaikhānasa* traditions. These are similar to usages 'parama-bhaṭṭāraka' and 'parama-māheśvara' stand for *Saura* (Sūrya cult) and *Māheśvara* (Śaiva cult) respectively.

3.3. *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*

a. Brief history of *Vaikhānasa* system and literature

Vaikhānasa system has derived the name from founder the sage Vikhanas, the author of *Dharma*, *Gr̥hya*, *Śrauta* and *Kalpa sūtras*. Marīci in his *Vimānārcanākalpa*² asserts that the sage Vikhanas is none other than Brahmā. Moreover, the sage Vikhanas is credited with the introduction of Viṣṇu worship with Vedic mode of rituals. The references in the contemporary *Gr̥hya-sūtras* and *Śrauta-sūtras* stand as proof for the authoritativeness for his works in the ritualistic canons. Vikhanas, in turn, taught his 0disciples viz. Atri, Bhṛgu, Kāśyapa, Marīci, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasiṣṭha and Angiras.

The treatises of *Vaikhānasa Āgama* mention these disciples of Vikhanas as the propagator of the *Vaikhānasa* system of rituals both in the temples and in the houses. The treatises of the first four disciples viz. Atri, Bhṛgu, Kāśyapa,

¹ *nārāyaṇāya vidmahe vāsudevāya dhīmahi / tanno viṣṇuḥ pracodayāt //*

² VAK.101 p.521.

Marīci are available now. *Kriyādhikāra*¹ refers to Angiras as an authority but his work is not referred to.

Four works of Atri, known as *Tantras*, are available. They are *Pūrvatantra*, *Ātreyantra*, *Viṣṇutantra* and *Uttaratantra*, comprising 80,008 *granthas*.² *Ātreyantra* is alone published as *Samūrtārcanādhikaraṇa*.

Bhṛgu's works generally called *Adhikāras* are thirteen in number and they are *Khila*, *Purātantra*, *Vāsādhikāra*, *Citrādhikāra*, *Mānādhikāra*, *Kriyādhikāra*, *Arcādhikāra*, *Yajñādhikāra*, *Varṇādhikāra*, *Prakīrṇādhikāra*, *Pratigṛhyādhikāra*, *Niruktādhikāra* and *Khilādhikāra*, all of them are said to comprise 80,008 *granthas*. Reference to *Mānādhikāra* in *Khilādhikāra*³ indicates that the former must be earlier work. References to the works viz. *Niruktādhikāra*⁴, *Vāsādhikāra*⁵ and *Khilādhikāra*⁶ are found in *Khilādhikāra* and this must be a late work of Bhṛgu.

Kāśyapa's compilations are called *Kāṇḍas* and three works are available viz. *Satyakāṇḍa*, *Tarkakāṇḍa* and *Jñānakāṇḍa* and they are said to have been composed in 64,000 *granthas*.

Marīci, referred to by other *Vaikhānasa* authors as authoritative amongst them, has authored eight works and his works are known by the name *saṁhitās*. The works are viz. *Jayasamhitā*, *Ānandasamhitā*, *Samjñānasamhitā*, *Virasamhitā*, *Vijayasamhitā*, *Vijitasamhitā*, *Vimalasamhitā* and *Jñānasamhitā*, all in total comprising of 1, 84, 000 *granthas*.

¹ KRA.14.160a:

ācūḍātpādaparyantaṁ bhrāmayediti cāṅgirāḥ /

² A *grantha* is a verse in *anuṣṭup* metre.

³ KLA.7.54b:

mānādhikāroktapathā gopuraṁ samyagācaret //

⁴ KRA.29.221b:

tatkathā ca niruktādhikāre proktā suvistarā //

⁵ KRA.4.57a:

vāsādhikāre yatproktamanuktaṁ śilpaśāstrataḥ /

⁶ KRA.16.64a:

dve dve kāryethavā caitāḥ khiloktā dvārapālikāḥ /

b. Date of extant *Vaikhānasa* treatises

Exact chronological order of the *Vaikhānasa* treatises pose a big problem because, these authors cross-refer to each other to offer their different views which are undoubtedly due to the local practices and customs prevalent in the region they settled in or migrated to in later times. In an analytical approach it is well-observed, “Kāśyapa and Marīci who do not refer to any other particular author but referred by other authors must have been earlier to the other two viz. Atri and Bhṛgu. Atri uses the term ‘pūrvaja’ in his work *Samūrtārcanādhikaraṇa*.¹ The term in singular meaning ‘early one’ may denote his preceptor i.e. sage Vikhanas. On the other hand, it may also be pointing to any other sage. His mention of Kāśyapa and Marīci² indicates that Atri must have succeeded these two authors but contemporaneous with Bhṛgu as both Atri and Bhṛgu mutually cross refer in their works. Bhṛgu makes passing references to Kāśyapa, Atri and Marīci in his *Kriyādhikāra*.³ Hence, it is possible to consider Bhṛgu last in the list of these four major authors of *Vaikhānasa* works.”⁴

The origin of *Vaikhānasa* system from the sage Vikhanas, one of the authors of *Kalpasūtras*, can be easily assigned a date prior to 800 BC. As such, his immediate disciples must be of the same time. However, the extant *Vaikhānasa* treatises can be ascribed to the period later than 2nd century AD but prior to 9th century AD, based on the terms and vocabulary used in them. The application of full-fledged injunctions of the *Vaikhānasa* works in art and architecture and archaeological sources, both temples and icons, confirm the same.

¹ SAA.32.43b:

prthak sarvaṃ ca kartavyamiti provāca pūrvajāḥ //

² SAA.45.71a:

ityevaṃ bhṛguṇā proktaṃ kāśyapena maricinā //

³ KRA.23.140b:

jñnoddhāraavidhiḥ proktā vistareṇa maricinā //

KRA.27.90b:

kāśyapenātrinā caiva mayā caiva maricinā //

⁴ K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *A Study of Vaikhānasa Iconography*, p.11-12.

It is safely observed, "The extant *Vaikhānasa* works cannot be ascribed to the period of its original authors on account of internal references to terms and grammatical rules. Therefore, one should take these four authors as the beginners of particular tradition/school who carried generation after generation, at the same time incorporating in their schools the architectural and sculptural features of different regions with necessary modifications in consonance with the development in the architecture and sculpture as well as the rituals necessitated by the changing religious conditions. For instance, the water-chute (*praṇāla*) was absent in the temples of the early period on account of the icons being in stucco or painting on the wall when only the water was sprinkled on the icon. In later times, when many festivals and rituals developed for the satisfaction of the *yajamāna* and bathing ceremony (*abhiṣeka*) was introduced, a *snāna-bera* evolved or the *dhruva-bera* got modified into stone to please the *yajamāna*. Such rituals promoted the *praṇāla* and other types of icons in the temples. However, the basic practices of rituals had not lost. Therefore, the *Āgamic* tradition included more new features with the developing time. In this way, the four schools of *Vaikhānasa* tradition begun by Marīci, Kāśyapa, Atri and Bhṛgu on the path shown by the sage Vikhanas developed upto the ninth century only. The names appearing in the extant texts also confirm the school rather than any individual author."¹

Therefore, it is safe to conclude and assign the probable date of the extant *Vaikhānasa* works based on the architectural and iconographic data by survey and study of icons and iconographical features available in the temples and monuments comparatively with the details found in the present version of these treatises as well as the contemporary treatises on *śilpa* (iconography), wherever required.

The monuments and the sculptural panels in Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Karnataka (Badami and Aihole) and the Deccan (Ellora) stand as witness that the prescriptions of the *Vaikhānasa* tradition is confined within these states on

¹ K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.13-14.

the southern side of the river Godavari. The main reason is the cultural contacts between these regions as well as the military campaigns of the Cālukyas and Pallavas, as observed by K.V. Soundara Rajan.¹

The Trimūrti concept prescribed in plastic art form for worship by *Vaikhānasa* tradition with the rule that Brahmā not to be in the middle is one of the concrete supports. As far as the monuments are concerned, the earliest one is the rock-cut cave temple dedicated to the Trinity at Mandagappattu (Tiruvannamalai district in Tamil Nadu) and this is supported with the inscription of the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I (c.580-630 AD), Trimūrti rock-cut is at Mamallapuram (c. 7th century AD), the rock-cut cave IV at Mogalrajapuram in Andhra Pradesh (c. 660-700 AD), Trimūrti panel in the cave XXVII at Ellora (c. 675-700 AD) and panel of Trimūrti (c. 760-790 AD) in cave XVI (Lañkeśvara cave) at Ellora stand as the best examples of Trimūrti worship prescribed only in *Vaikhānasa* treatises. The concept of Trimūrti appears from the time of early *Ālvyārs* (c. 200 AD). The representation of the same in plastic art form the later part of 6th century AD and non-continuation after eight century AD helps one to fix the probable date of present version of *Vaikhānasa* works to the period prior to 8th century AD.

In this regard, it is observed, “The *Vaikhānasa* works, while describing the temples for *Trimūrtis* (Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva) and *Dvimūrtis* (Viṣṇu and Śiva), prescribe the consecration and worship of Śiva as per the *Śaivite* manuals, probably *Śaiva Āgamas*, which could have been strictly followed by the Pallava ruler Rājasimha, whose titles are *Āgamānusāri* and *Āgamapriya*. Bhṛṅgu’s statement that Śiva (Candraśekhara) may be represented in either *sakala* (full form with all limbs) and *niṣkala* (formless or *līṅga*) aspect confirms that the *līṅga* worship had not become rule by the time of this work, but on the other hand, it substantiates the representation of Śiva as Somāskanda and *līṅga* together in the plastic art form. As per the rule that the *līṅga* should be installed in the *brahmasthāna* of the *garbha-grha*, the icon of Somāskanda must

¹ K.V. Soundara Rajan, *Glimpses of Indian Culture – Architecture, Art and Religion*, p.65.

be freestanding icon behind the *linga* or as bas-relief on the posterior wall as found in many rock-cut caves of the Pallavas. Therefore, the probable date of extant *Vaikhānasa* works can be easily ascribable to this transition period of *Śaiva* concepts.”¹

A number of inscriptions portray the role of the *Vaikhānasa brāhmaṇas* in the temple administration.² According to the Uttaramerur inscription of the reign of Pallava ruler Kampavarman (877 AD), Dāmodarabhaṭṭan, a *Vaikhānasa brāhmaṇa*, well-versed in *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*, is a recipient of donation of land as *arcanābhoga* to render service to the Lord.³ Tirumukkudal inscription mentions the receipt some garden land on behalf of Viṣṇu temple by the local *sabhā* (village administrative committee) with the condition that the *Vaikhānasas* would cultivate the land.⁴ *Vaikhānasa śāstra* in curriculum of an educational institution at Tribhuvani (Villupuram district) is mentioned in one of the Cola inscriptions of Rājādhirāja I (1048 A D).⁵ The term ‘*Āgama*’ is found in the inscription of Varadarāja temple at the same place in the reign of Vikrama Cola (1127 AD). All these evidences indicate the prominence of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*.

The multi-storeyed temples at Tirukkottiyur (Saumyanārāyaṇa Perumāl), Kanchipuram (Vaikuṇṭha Perumāl), Madurai (Kūṭalalākar) and especially Uttaramerur (Sundaravarada Perumāl) are fine examples of the temples following the *Vaikhānasa Āgamic* prescriptions. Moreover, the three-storeyed Rājagopālasvāmi temple at Mannarkoyil (near Tirunelveli) is the only later structure constructed as per the *Vaikhānasa* works, besides a number of rock-cut *sthānaka* and *śayana* forms of Viṣṇu. With all, one may safely conclude and assign the extant *Vaikhānasa* treatises to the period between 2nd and 9th century AD.

¹ K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.17-18.

² *SI*.VII, Nos.139, 140, 142.

³ *SI*.VI. No.287.

⁴ D. Dayalan, *Early Temples of Tamil Nadu - Their Role in Socio-Economic life* (c. A.D. 550 – 925), p.52.

⁵ S. R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Chola Temples*, p.354.

It is to note that that *Vaikhānasa* school did not develop further after this period like the *Pāñcarātra* literature. The plausible reasons may be - a) *Vaikhānasa* concepts are not open to all except the *Vaikhānasa-sūtrins* (*brāhmaṇas*); whereas *Pāñcarātra* became popular and open to all *Vaiṣṇava* traditions of other philosophic schools also; b) the theological concept in *Pāñcarātra* allowed every person to worship (*ātmārtha-pūjā*) the Lord after proper initiation (*dikṣā*) whereas such rituals are confined only to the *Vaikhānasa brāhmaṇas* as officiating priests; c) with the development of *Vaiṣṇava* philosophy and with the influence of *Purāṇas* like *Bhāgavata* and *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* aiming only at *mokṣa* rather than mundane aspirations, *Pāñcarātra* literature could occupy a popular and prominent place with slight modifications in rules as per context and this promoted more literary works in the *Pāñcarātra* tradition, whereas with a number of modifications suitable to the changing time, *Vaikhānasa* works developed in *paddhatis* or certain regional pattern of worship; and, d) almost by 10th century AD, many temples of *Vaikhānasa* system had to undergo change into *Pāñcarātra* mode for want of *Vaikhānasa brāhmaṇas* as per the provision of such conversions found in the *Vaikhānasa* works.”¹

3.4. *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*

a. Meaning and Scope

Nārāyaṇa is said to have revealed the *Pāñcarātra* system. It is also stated that *śruti* and *smṛti* are His commandments. *Mahābhārata*² mentions the *Pāñcarātra* system as *Mahopaniṣad* (great *Upaniṣad*) consisting of the concepts of four *Vedas* and the duo of *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*. Therefore, it is known as *Pāñcarātra*. The system was revealed by Nārāyaṇa to Nārada.

¹ K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.20.

² *MBh* (*Śānti*).329.111b-112a:

*idaṁ mahopaniṣadaṁ caturvedasamanvitam /
sāṅkhyayogakṛtaṁ tena pāñcarātrānuśabditaṁ //*

The compounded word '*Pāñcarātra*' consisting of two words '*pañca*' and '*rātra*.' the term '*rātra*' a changed form means both 'night' as well as 'knowledge'. Hence, one may find different definitions of the term *Pāñcarātra* in the treatises.

Śrīpraśna saṁhitā states: '*rātri*' means *ajñāna* (unreal wisdom rather ignorance) and the '*pañca*' means the mode to dispel *ajñāna*. The system which performs this action is *Pāñcarātra*.¹

Nārada Pāñcarātra speaks: the term '*rātra*' stands for wisdom which are five in number. The system comprising of the concepts of the five divisions of wisdom is '*Pāñcarātra*.'²

Pauṣkara saṁhitā,³ considering the term '*rātra*' to mean 'night', defines the term and concept of *Pāñcarātra*. The systems *Veda*, *Vedānta*, *Purāṇa*, *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* are the parts of *Pāñcarātra*. *Veda*, *Vedānta*, *Purāṇa*, *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* become powerless like the night (*rātryāyate*) when no sun is visible. They become valuable with *Pāñcarātra*. Hence, the system is called *Pāñcarātra*.

Śāṇḍilya saṁhitā,⁴ where the term '*rātra*' is taken to mean 'wisdom,' provides the definition as: *Veda*, *Āraṇyaka*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga* and *Śaiva* are five divisions of wisdom and they are meant for the bliss of the Supreme Lord.

¹ *Śrīpraśna*.2.40:

*rātrirajñānamityuktaṁ pañcetyajñānanāśakam /
tacchāstraṁ pāñcarātraṁ syādanvarthasyānurodhataḥ //*

² *Nārada pāñcarātra*.1.44: (cf. Introduction to *Īśvara Saṁhitā*, vol.I, p.25).

*rātraṁ ca jñānavacanāṁ jñānaṁ pañcavidhaṁ smṛtam /
tenedaṁ Pāñcarātram hi pravādanti maṇiṣiṇaḥ //*

³ *Pauṣkara*.68.307b-308:

*purāṇaṁ vedavedāntaṁ tathā'nyāt sāṅkhyayogajam /
pañcaprakāraṁ vijñeyaṁ yatra rātryāyate'bjaja //
phalotkarśavaśenaiva pāñcarātramīti smṛtam //*

⁴ *Śāṇḍilya*.1.4.76-76: (cf. *Catalogue of Pāñcarātra Saṁhitā*, p.6-7)

*sāṅkhyam yogastathā śaivam vedāraṇye ca pañcakam /
procyante rātrayaḥ kānte ātmānandasamarpaṇāt //
pañcānāmipsito yo'rithaḥ sa yatra samavāpyate /
paramānandametena prāpnoti paramātmanah //*

*Pādma saṁhitā*¹ follows the way of *Paṇḍara saṁhitā* in defining the term *Pāñcarātra* but offers clear meaning: five other systems, though of high grade, are of less value like the less-illuminative moon and the stars which can not shine during the day when the sun shines. The system which makes them equal to night is called *Pāñcarātra*. In this, the five systems may be taken as *Veda*, *Āraṇyaka*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga* and *Śaiva*. Moreover, this treatise mentions a number of systems of wisdom viz. *Yoga*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Buddha-sāstra* (*Bauddha*), *Arhata-sāstra* (*Jaina*), *Kāpāla*, *Śuddha-śaiva* and *Pāśupata*. However, they are contrary to each other. For all of them, the treatise states, Lord Nārāyaṇa is the origin.²

One may find in the treatises of *Pāñcarātra Āgama* also some interesting definitions for the term '*Pāñcarātra*.' This definition not only speaks of the concept of *Pāñcarātra āgama* but also the origin of the system i.e. Nārāyaṇa.

Īśvara saṁhitā states: the five divine attributes of Lord Nārāyaṇa, viz. Sudarśana (*cakra*), Pāñcajanya (*śaṅkha*), Kaumodakī (*gadā*), Nandaka (*khaḍga*) and Śārṅga (*dhanus*), arose on the earth in different places like Pauṇḍravardhana, in the form of five sages viz. Śaṇḍilya, Aupagāyana, Mauñjyāyana, Kauśika and Bhāradvāja.³ Lord Nārāyaṇa revealed the wisdom to all the five sages individually for one day (day and night). Therefore, the *sāstra* is known as *Pāñcarātra*.⁴

¹ *Pādma (Jñāna)*.1.72-74:

*pañcetarāṇi śāstrāṇi rātriyante mahāntyapi /
candratārāgaṇaṁ yadvat śobhate naiva vāsare //*
*tathetarāṇi śobhante pañca naivāsya sannidhau /
pañcatvamathavā yadvaddīpyamāne divākare //*
rechanti rātrayastadvadītarāṇi tadanitke //

² *Pādma (Jñāna)*.1.47-54a.

³ *Īśvara*.21.518-19:

*sudarśanādyāḥ hetīśāḥ pañca brahmaṣīrūpataḥ /
samutpannāḥ kṣītītale pauṇḍravardhnasthalādiṣu //*
*pañcāyudhāmsāste pañca śaṇḍilyaścaupagāyanaḥ /
mauñjyāyanaḥ kauśikaśca bhāradvājaśca yoginaḥ //*

⁴ *Īśvara*. 532-33a:

*pañcāpi prthagekaikadivārātraṁ jagatprabhuḥ /
adhyāpayāmasa yatastatatanmunipuṅgavāḥ //*
śāstraṁ sarvajanaireloke pañcarātramitīryate /

*Vihagendra saṁhitā*¹ offers another view: in the beginning of Kṛtayuga, the system was revealed by Keśava (Nārāyaṇa) to Ananta, Garuḍa, Viṣvaksena (Seneśā), Brahmā and Kapālabhṛt (Śiva) individually in the five nights consecutively. Hence, this system is called *Pāñcarātra*.

Some *Pāñcarātra* treatises provide also the metaphysical meaning of the term '*Pāñcarātra*.' According to *Parama saṁhitā*,² the ātmans (with body) in the world possess five subtle and gross qualities of five gross elements (*pañca-mahābhūta*). The system that helps the ātmans to get rid of the effect of *mahābhūtas* is called *Pāñcarātra*. *Viśvāmitra saṁhitā*³ details the same in different fashion and provides special meaning for the root 'rā' (dispeller or remover) in the term '*rātra*.' *Puruṣottama saṁhitā*⁴ states: the *bhakti* (devotion) to Bhagavān (Nārāyaṇa) is the only means for eternal salvation (*mukti*). The *śāstra* which speaks of this is *Pāñcarātra*.

The *Pāñcarātra* system claims its origin from *Ekāyana-veda* which is the part of *Kaṇva śākhā* of the *Veda*, according to *Jayākhyā saṁhitā*,⁵ *Īśvara*

¹ *Vihagendra*.1.p.7 (cf. *Catalogue of Pāñcarātra Saṁhitā*, p.7)
 ādau kṛtayuge prāpte keśāvena prasādītā /
 ananto garuḍaścaiva viṣvaksenaḥ kapālabhṛt //
 brahmā ityeva pañcaite śṛṇvanti pṛthgīritam /
 anantaṁ prathame rātrau garuḍaśca dvitīyake //
 tṛtīyarātre seneśāḥ caturthe vedhasāśritam /

² *Parama*.1.39b-41a:
 mahābhūtaguṇāḥ pañca rātrayo dehinaḥ smṛtāḥ //
 tadyogādviniṣṭtervā pāñcarātramiti smṛtam /
 bhūtamātrāṇi garvaśca buddhiravyaktameva ca //
 rātrayaḥ puruṣasyoktāḥ pāñcarātraṁ tataḥ smṛtam /

³ *Viśvāmitra*.2.3-5: (cf. *Catalogue of Pāñcarātra Saṁhitā*, p.7)
 pañcendriyāṇi viśayāḥ pañcabhūtāni tadguṇāḥ /
 pañcaśadbhidheyāni vidvāṁso'pyācacakṣire //
 rā ityayamapi prokto dhātūrādānavācakaḥ /
 viśayendriyabhūtānāmādātāraśca pañcarāḥ //
 manuṣyāḥ pālanāteṣāṁ pāñcarātramiti smṛtam //

⁴ *Puruṣottama*.1.4 (cf. *Catalogue of Pāñcarātra Saṁhitā*, p.7):
 bhagavadbhaktireva syād bhaktānāṁ muktikāraṇam /
 tadbhaktibodhakaṁ śāstraṁ pāñcarātrāgamaṁ smṛtam //

⁵ *Jayākhyā*, etc. 1.109: (cf. *Catalogue of Pāñcarātra Saṁhitā*, p.9)
 kāṇvīm śākhāmadhiyānāvaupagāyana kauśikau /

*saṁhitā*¹ and *Pādma saṁhitā*.² *Sāttvata saṁhitā*³ mentions this as an important one along with *Yajurveda*.

*Śrīpraśna saṁhitā*⁴ speaks: *Ekāyana-veda* is the head of the *Vedas*; *Pāñcarātra* elaborates the concept of *Ekāyana-veda* and it provides *mokṣa* to the followers of the same.

The term *Sātvata* and *Ekāntins* denote the followers of *Pāñcarātra* system. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*⁵ mentions the sources of wisdom viz. *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda*, *Atharvaṇa*, *Vakovākya* and *Ekāyana*. In the compounded word *Ekāyana*, the terms ‘*eka*’ (only) and ‘*ayana*’ (path) play an important role. As per *Īśvara saṁhitā*⁶ and *Pārameśvara saṁhitā*, no other path is found in other sections of wisdom. Hence, this Vedic portion is called ‘*ekāyana-śāstra*’.

b. Antiquity of Pāñcarātra Āgamas

The origin of *Pāñcarātra* system can be traced to *Ekāyana-veda*. One can find the reference also in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, cited elsewhere.

As far as the literary evidences are concerned regarding the theme of *Pāñcarātra* tradition, the earliest reference is the sutras of Pāṇini (c. 800 BC). The sūtra ‘*vāsudevārjunābhyām vuṇ*’⁷ deserves special attention. The suffix

¹ *Īśvara*.21.554:

*kāṇvīm śākhāmadhiyānān vedavedāntapāragān /
saṁskṛtya dikṣayā samyak sātvatadyuktamārgataḥ //*

² *Padma* (Caryā).21.4:

*aupagāyanapūrvāste nānāgotrā mumukṣavaḥ /
adhiyānāḥ kaṇvaśākhām tathā mādhyaṇdīnāhvayam //*

³ *Sātvata*.25.96a:

ekāyanān yajurmayān āśrāvitamanantaram /

⁴ *Śrīpraśna*.2.38:

*vedamekāyanam nāma vedānām śirasi sthitam /
tadarthakam pāñcarātram mokṣadam tatkrīyāvatām //*

⁵ *Chāndogya*.7.2.

*ṛgvedam bhagavo’dhyemi, yajurvedam, sāmavedam, hyatharvaṇam, vakovākyaṁ,
ekāyanam ...*

⁶ *Īśvara*.1.19; *Pārameśvara*.1.57b-58a:

*mokṣāyanāya vai panthā etadanyo na vidyate /
tasmādekāyanam nāma prabhavanti maṇiṣiṇaḥ //*

⁷ *Pāṇini Sūtra*.4.3.99.

‘*vun*’ in this *sūtra* is used in the meaning ‘Vāsudeva as Honorable One’ i.e. Deity to be worshipped. The suffix is not used in the sense of *apatya* (issue/son/daughter). Patañjali (c. 2nd century AD), contemporary of Puṣyamitra, while commenting on this *sūtra*, states, “It is not for the *Kṣatīrya* (son of Vasudeva) but of High One.”¹ Kaiyaṭa, the commentator of *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, confirms, “Here, the Eternal Supreme and Divine Vāsudeva is taken.”² This is the earliest reference to Vāsudeva, the main divinity of *Pāñcarātra* tradition.

Mahābhārata is the next literary record for the *Pāñcarātra* tradition. It is stated in the *Śāntiparvan* that the Lord Himself the knower of entire *Pāñcarātra* tradition.³ In the *Mokṣadharmā-parvan* of *Mahābhārata*, *Pāñcarātra* is taken as one of the five sections of wisdom.⁴

Based on the three important epigraphic records, the concept of *Pāñcarātra* based on Para (Vāsudeva) and Vyūha (Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha), can be dated back to 3rd century BC. The analysis of them helps in settling the antiquity of *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*.

The famous stone inscription at Ghosundi⁵ (near Chittoorgarh in Rajasthan) in Brāhmī script records the erection of a *pūjā-śilā* (stone for worship = icon) for Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva, *śilā-prākāra* (stone enclosure = *prākāra*) and *vāṭikā* (garden) by Gājāyana, the son of Pārāśari and who is performer of Aśvamedha (Aśvamedhayājñin). Gājāyana is mentioned with the

¹ *Mahābhāṣya*. (on *Sūtra*.4.3.99): *athavā naiṣā kṣatriyākhyā / samjñaiṣā tatrabhavataḥ //*

² Kaitaṭa on *Pāṇini-sūtra* 3.3.98 (cf. *Catalogue of Pāñcarātra Saṁhitā*, p.9)
nityaḥ paramātmā devaṭaviśeṣa iha vāsudevo grhyata ityarthah/

³ *MBh* (*Śānti*).349.68:

Pāñcarātrasya kṛtsnasya vettā tu bhagavān svayam //

⁴ *MBh* (*Śānti*).349.1:

*sāṅkhyam yogam pāñcarātram vedāraṇyakameva ca /
jñānānyetāni brahmaṛṣe lokeṣu pracaranti ha //*

MBh (*Śānti*).349.64:

*sāṅkhyam yogam pāñcarātram vedāḥ pācupatam tathā /
jñānānyetāni rājarṣe viddhi nānamatāni ca //*

⁵ Ghosundi Inscription (cf. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, Vol.I, p.89-91):

*kārito ayam rājñā bhāgavatena gājāyanena pārāśariputrena rvaṭānena (?)
aśvamedhayājñinā bhagavadbhyaṁ saṅkarṣaṇavāsudevābhyaṁ anihitābhyaṁ
sarveśvarābhyaṁ pūjāśilā prakāro nārāyaṇavāṭikā /*

epithet 'bhāgavata' and the duo of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva is described as 'Sarveśvaras.' Kauṭilya's *Artha-śāstra* also includes worship of Saṅkarṣaṇa. Although Saṅkarṣaṇa is the elder brother of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa as per early part of *Mahābhārata*, in the religious philosophy of *Bhāgavatas* described in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of *Śānti-parvan* of *Mahābhārata*,¹ Saṅkarṣaṇa is identified with the *jīva* (Individual soul) whereas Vāsudeva is identified with *Paramātman* (Supreme One). It is interesting to note all the three i.e. icon of the Lord, supportive enclosure and the flower-garden for worship is considered to be highly meritorious deed, as per *Sātvata saṁhitā*² and other religious literature. Donation of a land to the temples as *arcanābhoga* (cultivation and flower-garden) is also attested with the inscription at Uttaramerur³ (c. 877 AD), Tirumukkudal,⁴ etc.

Garuḍa-stambha with inscription at Besnagar (modern Vidisa near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh) is the next concrete evidence for the prevalence of Pāñcarātra tradition in the 2nd century BC. The Brāhmi inscription on this column

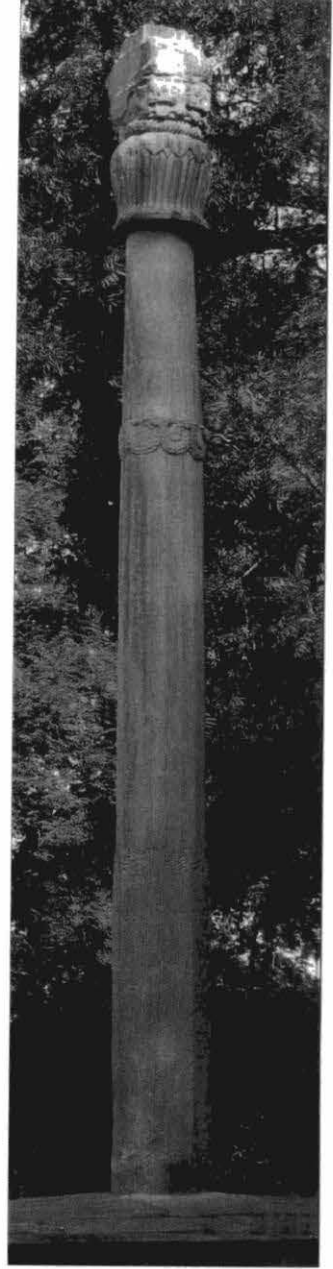


Fig.7. *Garuḍa-stambha*,
Vidisa

¹ MBh (*Śānti*).339.25, 40:

yaṁ praviśya bhavantīha muktā vai dvijasattama /
sa vāsudevo vijñeyaḥ paramātmā sanātanaḥ //
jñeyaḥ sa eva rājendra jivassaṅkarṣaṇaḥ prabhuh //

² *Sātvata*.25.366-367:

yaḥ saprākāramārāmaṁ samprayacchati vai vibhoḥ /
nānāpuṣpaphalopetaṁ vāpidrumasamākulam //
sābjatoyāśayopetaṁ mārakhaḍgasamanvitam /
sa nandanavane bhogān bhuktivā yātyacyutālayam //

³ *SII*.VI. No.287.

⁴ D. Dayalan, *op. cit.*, p.52.

mentions the Greek king Antialkidas indicating the king to have reigned in the second century BC. in addition to the king Rājā Kāśiputa Bhagabhadra, prospering in the fourteenth year of his reign. The first part of the inscription records the erection of *Garuḍa-dhvaja* of Vāsudeva, the God of Gods, by Heliodara, the son of Diya (Dias), a *Takṣaṣilaka* (a native of Taxila), a *Yavana* (Yona) ambassador, who came from Mahārāja Aintalikita (Antialkidas). The term '*Bhāgavata*' prefixing to the name Heliodara is interesting one which confirms that



Fig.8. Tāla-dhvaja, Vidisa

the *Bhāgavata* cult (obviously the *Pāñcarātra* tradition) attracted and captured everyone including the foreigners. The second part of the inscription mentions three auspicious principles viz. self-restraint, charity and conscientiousness which, when practiced, lead to Heaven. This inscription confirms the worship of Vāsudeva, the God of Gods and the Supreme Deity as well as Garuḍa as the recognized. Moreover, a pillar capital with *tāla* tree (palmyrah), emblem of Saṅkarṣaṇa, found in the same site, belonging to the same period, confirms the status of Saṅkarṣaṇa, one of the four members of Vyūha concept of *Pāñcarātra* tradition. The *dhvaja/stambha* is a part of the temple complex. Hence, this column does not stand just as symbol of the tradition but as a part of the temple dedicated to Viṣṇu in the form of Vāsudeva and Saṅkarṣaṇa.

The inscription Śoḍaśa (1st century AD) found at Mathura records the installation of five *Viras* by a lady named Tosa. The concept of *Pañca-viras* (Five *Viras*) is a common one in the *Vaikhānasa* system but as secondary grade (Mānuṣa Vāsudeva) and the plaques at Kontamotu (Andhra Pradesh) substantiates the same. Undoubtedly, the *Vaikhānasa* tradition was less-known or unknown in the Northern India, the installation of five *Viras* must be taken as the Vṛṣṇi group consisting of Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Sāmba because by this time, Kṛṣṇa and his brothers have gained the states

and identified with the Supreme One which is substantiated by the verses of *Bhagavad Gītā*.

The inscription of Nāganikā, the Sātavāhana queen at Nanaghat cave (Maharashtra), containing the statement '*namo saṅkarṣaṇavāsudevānām*' is noteworthy. In this inscription, the names of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva along with other deities indicate the prevalence of *Pāñcarātra* cult in this region. This inscription of the second or the first century BC stands as authentic record for the spread of *Bhāgavata* (*Pāñcarātra*) religion to the South.

The Chinna Ganjam inscription of the time of Yajña Śrī Śatakarni (c. 2nd century BC) is indicative of the flourishing of this tradition in the Krishna District (Andhra Pradesh) during this period. The phrase '*bhaktyārādhitaviṣṇuḥ*' as a suffix/epithet to Simhaviṣṇu of Pallava dynasty mentioned in the Udayendiram copper-plate of Nandivarma Pallavamalla¹ is noteworthy for the prevalence of *Vaiṣṇava* tradition in South India.

c. *Pāñcarātra* Literature

The *Pāñcarātra Āgama* has a vast collection of treatises. The treatises are divided into two broad classes viz. *Divya* (Revealed) and *Munibhāṣita* (traditional). *Divyas* are the *Ratnatraya*. Other treatises are *Munibhāṣita*. Generally, the *Pāñcarātra* works are enumerated to be 108. Dr. O. Schrader gave the number of 210 in a tabular form. Dr. H. Daniel Smith has given the details of *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*.

The early *Pāñcarātra* treatises, generally known as *Ratna-traya*, viz. *Sāttvata*, *Pauṣkara* and *Jayākhyā*, had been elaborated in later times in well-known three post-classical or *Arthopapādika saṁhitās* (explanatory). *Īśvara saṁhitā* is the explanatory work on *Sāttvata saṁhitā*. *Pāramaśvara saṁhitā* is the elaboration of *Pauṣkara saṁhitā*. *Pādma saṁhitā* is the detailed one of *Jayākhyā saṁhitā*.

¹ *Pallavar Ceppedukal Muppatu*, p.125

Sātvata saṁhitā, the first and the foremost of all the *Pāñcarātra* treatises, is one and the only work to bear the same title as that of *Sāttvata Dharma*. These three treatises date back to c.300 AD to c.500 AD. *Ahīrbudhnya saṁhitā* comes in order which can be dated between c.500 AD and c.800 AD. *Īśvara saṁhitā*, *Pāramaśvara saṁhitā* and *Pādma saṁhitā*, detailed works on *Ratna-traya*, can be dated between c.600 AD to c. 900 AD. An important treatise viz. *Śrīpraśna saṁhitā* is a derivative work taking a large part of its text from the *Pādma saṁhitā*.

It is a general belief that the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* texts were originally divided into four *pādas* with the names *jñāna*, *yoga*, *kriyā*, and *caryā*. *Lakṣmītantra*¹ states that the *Pāñcarātra* concepts are explained in four *pādas* viz. *jñāna*, *yoga*, *kriyā*, and *caryā*. It is noteworthy that the *Vaikhānasa Āgama* texts do not individually contain this division.

Of the *Pāñcarātra* texts, *Pādma saṁhitā* has the conventional fourfold *Āgamic* division (*pādas*) viz. *jñāna*, *yoga*, *kriyā*, and *caryā*. *Bṛhadbrahma saṁhitā* has four *pādas* i.e. *prathama*, *dvitīya*, *trītiya* and *caturtha*. *Nārāyaṇa saṁhitā* is divided into three *kāṇḍas* viz. *Jñānavaibhava-kāṇḍa*, *Yajñavaibhava-kāṇḍa* and *Iṣṭivaibhava-kāṇḍa*. *Sanatkumāra saṁhitā* is divided into five *Rātras* called *Brahmarātra*, *Śivarātra*, *Indrarātra*, *Ṛṣirātra* and *Brhaspatirātra*, of which the last one is completely missing.² The *Pārameśvara saṁhitā* is divided into *Jñānakāṇḍa*, of which one chapter alone is available, and *Kriyākāṇḍa*, which contains the details of both *kriyā* and *caryā*. The *Ratna-traya* (*Sāttvata*, *Pauṣkara* and *Jayākhya*) do not contain the division of *Āgamas* into *pādas*. The division into *pādas* is not available in the texts of the later period also.

The *Pādma saṁhitā* is the only work to have four *pādas* with detailed information. *Jñānapāda* deals with creation, features of Brahman, means of

¹ *Lakṣmītantra*.51.2b-3a:

caryāpāda-kriyāpāda-pāda ca jñānāyogayoh //
itī nānāvidhaṁ tantraṁ catuspādopabrmhitam //

² Smith, H. Daniel, *Descriptive Catalogue of Smith's Āgama Collections*, pp.81-84.

mokṣa and the *lokas* (worlds) above and below. *Yogapāda* provides information on the matter of yogic practices such as *yogāṅgas* and *nāḍis*. *Kriyāpāda* elaborates the technical details i.e. construction of temples, creation of icons and consecration of temples and icons therein. *Caryāpāda* focuses on the rules for daily worship, annual and minor festivals and expiatory and other minor rituals.

The *Pāñcarātra* system advocates the fourfold worship of the Supreme, through *kumbha* (pitcher), *kuṇḍa* (fire-altar), *maṇḍala* (diagram) and *bimba* (icon). The *Pāñcarātra* treatises of very early period do not give much importance to the icon and its worship and temples but the main focus was on *maṇḍala* which includes *kumbha* and *kuṇḍa*. However, the early texts of *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* contain the synonymous words such as *pratimā*,¹ *arcā*,² *bimba*,³ *vigraha*⁴ and *mūrti*,⁵ which are just mentioned without much elaboration as we find in the later works. The early *Pāñcarātra* texts also refer to temples (*prāsāda*⁶ or *āyatana*¹). These references prove that the iconic

¹ Jayākhya.13.57a: (cf. *Īśvara saṁhitā*, Vol.I, p.)

pratimāṁ kārayet

Pauṣkara.36.414a:

pratimāṁ vigrahaṁ śaśavt sarveṣāṁ śreyase tu vai /

² *Pauṣkara.31.9a:*

niveśya tasmin karmārcāṁ hārakeyūrabhūṣitāṁ /

Pauṣkara.32.24a:

sārcā tu śailakāṣṭhotthā paṭe kuḍye ca citritā /

³ *Sātvata.7.11b:*

ghṛtena pañcagavyena bimbapādāmbhasā tu vā //

Pauṣkara.38.72:

caturṇāṁ brāhmaṇādināṁ bhagavadbhāvināṁ vibho /

hitārthaṁ jñātumicchāmi bimbāpādanameva ca //

⁴ *Sātvata.7.114:*

svamantrasannidhiṁ tatra kṛtvā tadvigrahānvitam /

pūjitaṁ patrapuṣpādyaistatsiddhāyatanam smṛtam //

Pauṣkara.38.143a:

adrṣṭavigrahāṇāṁ ca pūḥanāmaśubham bhavet /

⁵ *Sātvata.6.108a:*

caturmūrtiṁ tadūrdhve tu dhyātvābhyarcya yathākramam /

Pauṣkara.36.126:

caturbhirvāsudevādyairmūrtibhiḥ prāgudiritaḥ /

keśavādyairdvādaśabhirmatyādyairdaśabhistathā //

Pauṣkara.38.144a:

vibhavavyūhamūrtināṁ mantramūrte'rcane sati /

⁶ *Sātvata.7.117a:*

worship was not unknown in the period of early *Pāñcarātra* treatises. The *Jayākhya saṁhitā*, one of the *Ratna-traya*, enjoins the performance of *mahotsava* after installation of the icon is over. The early texts do not mention grand structures (temples) and grand festivals (*mahotsava*) as found in the later texts.

d. *Pāñcarātra Āgama and Dīkṣā*

The *Pāñcarātra* tradition got popularity throughout India by prescribing special rules of rituals of *dīkṣā* (initiation) well-known as *Pañcasamṣkāra*.² They are *tāpa* (marking with hot metal emblems on shoulders), *puṇḍra* (12 *ūrdhva-puṇḍras* or sacred mark with white clay), *nāma* (new name), *mantra* (initiation to three esoteric mantras) and *yāga* (worship of Lord). It is a sacrament which should be received by all so as to become *Vaiṣṇava*. Specialty of this is that this applicable for also for both women and *śūdras* who do not get the *Upanayana*. Obviously, the rituals like this are meant for only *dvijas* (twice-born), as per the rules of *Vedic* tradition. Therefore, the *Pāñcarātra* tradition got objected by other *Vedic* schools and *Pāñcarātra* system had been criticized as non-*vedic*. Of course, the *dīkṣā* is not uncommon in pre-*Pāñcarātra* period and this mode is prescribed also in *Mahābhārata*.³

A number of objections raised by followers of other schools had been answered in the work *Āgamaprāmāṇya* by Yāmunācārya, preceptor of Rāmānuja who propounded the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* School in its real sense.

prāsādadvāradeśācca yatra śaṅkhadhvanikṣayaḥ /

¹ *Paṇḍara*.36.2:

yadyadāyatanam divyam siddhāyatanameva ca /
nṛṇāmupāyabhūtam yadajñānam jñānināmapi //

Paṇḍara.38.143b:

evamāyatanasthānam grhitāntaravartinām //
tāpaḥ puṇḍrastathā nāma mantro yāgaśca pañcamah //

² *Mbh* (*Bhīṣma*).46.39-40:

brāhmaṇaiḥ kṣatriyavaiśyaḥ śūdraśca kṛtalakṣaṇaiḥ /
arcaniyaśca sevyāśca nityayuktaiḥ svakarmasu //
sātvataḥ vidhimāsthāya gītaḥ saṁkarṣaṇena ca /
dvāparasya yugasyānte ādau kaliyugasya ca //

Vedāntadeśika, one of the followers of the above school, also justified and elaborated the *Pāñcarātra* concepts in his *Pāñcarātrarakṣā*.

Pañcasamiskāra is administered to all, including women and *śūdras*, so as to make them eligible to become devout *Vaiṣṇavas* and get the qualification for doing worship to the Lord. The *Brāhmaṇas* with such *dikṣā* are eligible for both *ātmārtha-pūjā* (domestic or personal) and *parārtha-pūjā* (temple worship for others). This sacrament becomes the characteristic marks for identifying a true devotee of Viṣṇu.

The *dikṣā* (initiation) to all is the main reason for the full-fledged development of the icons meant for domestic worship (*grhārcā*). A number of *tāntrika mantras* evolved and they were taught to the women and *śūdras* who required for the personal worship. As far as the rules of applying only the *Vedic* mantras for the rituals are concerned, this is in gross violation of the *Vedic* tradition but it was required in the changing society when new concepts and theories started evolving and growing gradually but steadily.

3.5. Differences between *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa*

There appear some conflicts in the treatises of both *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra* traditions. There is common rule that (*tantra-sāṅkarya*) mixing up of two *Āgamas* or *Āgamic* traditions is not permissible.

The system, on the basis of which, all rituals and guidelines right from the selection of the site (*bhūparikṣā*) to completion of the construction of the temple has been executed, should be adhered to for also *pratiṣṭhā* (installation and consecration) and other rituals; other systems should not be brought in and mixed up with the former, thus states Atri. Further statements are: those who meddle with the *Vaikhānasa* system will go to hell; the *Vaikhānasa* mode could be adopted in a temple where the *Pāñcarātra* mode prevails; *Vaikhānasa* is *saumya* (gentle) and *Pāñcarātra* is *āgneya* (fierce); as per the instructions of the ancients, *Vaikhānasa* is the best; the *Vaikhānasa* mode alone is to be adopted in temples situated in the villages. The *Tāntrika* (*Pāñcarātrika*) mode is applicable

for the worship in temples situated on the banks of rivers, top of hills or in an uninhabited place.

The same way, one can find some statements also in *Pāñcarātra* treatises. In the section of *prayaścitta* rituals, it is stated that the entry of *Vaikhānasa* inside the *garbha-grha* requires purificatory bathing of the icons with milk and re consecration.

One may wonder why the *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa* schools, both focusing on the worship of Lord Viṣṇu, conflict with each other. The *Ratnatraya* and the main texts of *Pāñcarātra* composed earlier do not contain any such expression directed against the *Vaikhānasa*. *Vaikhānasa* texts in question do not deny the authority of the Such passages could have crept into the *Vaikhānasa* texts after the *Pāñcarātra* became popular and therefore, later *Pāñcarātra* texts do have such expressions against the *Vaikhānasa*. The followers of both the schools, of course in later time, did not display hatred or rivalry but began to denigrate mutually.

3.6. Concept and scope of icon in Early Literature and Vaiṣṇava Āgamas

The terms *arcā*, *bera*, *bimba* and *mūrti* are synonymous and they mean an icon created with the standard dimensions and characteristics. The icons are the conceived medium of the worship of the divinities who remain also in unmanifest form. The *dhyāna-śloka*s and alike found in the literature help one mentally contemplate on the divine powers. However, such contemplation is not fit for the laymen engrossed in the worldly aspects. A number of passages and references found in the pre-classical (*Vedic* to *Sūtra* period) and classical literature especially in the *Āgamas* and *śilpa-śāstra*. *Arcā* (icon) is the easiest form of Viṣṇu to please and to satisfy the devotees. In this mode, He receives whatever the devotees offer.

The Supreme Lord Viṣṇu remains in five forms viz. Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antaryāmi and Arcā. The first three are beyond one's limit by time and space; the fourth one is within everyone but not easily perceivable; and,

arcā, the icon, is suitable to all irrespective of one's mental and physical conditions. In this mode, Viṣṇu pleases and satisfies the devotees by accepting whatever the devotees offer.

a. Concept of Icons in Pre-classical literature

Puruṣasūkta is the earliest reference to description of the manifest form of Viṣṇu which states that Puruṣa (Viṣṇu) is possessor of thousands of heads, eyes, legs, etc.¹ the term '*daśāṅgulam*' meaning 'ten *āṅgulas*' is the passage is very interesting. This must be the earliest reference to the dimension (measurement) of the manifest form of the Supreme Being whether the measurement stands for micro or macro level.

The *Rk.1.55.2*² speaks of a striding form (*urugāya*) of Viṣṇu (i.e. Trivikrama) residing on the hill, clearly in an abode or shrine. The *Rk.2.33.9*³ also speaks of the gigantic form of Viṣṇu on the hills.

The *Rk.10.155.1*⁴ talks about the solution what a person should do when deprived of wealth etc. It advises him to go to hill where the Lord, seat of Lakṣmi (*śīrim biṭhasya*), resides. This passage is explained as dealing with Śrīnivāsa of Venkaṭādri (Tiumala Hills) in the *Venkaṭādrimāhātmya* of *Bhaviṣyottaraapurāṇa*. The *Mahābhārata*⁵ verse substantiates this concept by providing additional information of golden icon.

The *Rk.2.33.9*⁶ talks about the brown form with powerful limbs/parts. The *Rk.10.130.3*,¹ in a way of enquiry about the materials in the worship of the

¹ *Puruṣasūkta.1.*

*sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt /
sa bhūmim viśvato vṛtvā atyaṭiṣṭhaddaśāṅgulam //*

² *Rk.1.55.2* (cf. *Parama saṁhitā*, Introduction, p.35)

pra te viṣṇo śūṣamatu manma girikṣite urugāyā viṣṇave /

³ *Rk.2.33.9* (cf. *Parama saṁhitā*, Introduction, p.35)

pra tadviṣṇu stavate vīryeṇa mṛgo na bhīmaḥ kucaro giriṣṭhāḥ /

⁴ *Rk.10.155.1* (cf. *Parama saṁhitā*, Introduction, p.35)

arāyi kāṇe vikaṭe giriṁ gaccha sadānve / śīrim biṭhasya satvabhiḥ tebhiṣṭvā cātayāmasi.

⁵ *Mbh (Adi).187.27:*

*giriṣṭhe tu sā tasmin sthitā tvasitalocanā /
bibhrājamānā śūṣubhe pratimeva hiraṇmayī //*

⁶ *Rk.2.33.9* (cf. *Parama saṁhitā*, Introduction, p.35)

Divine, contains the two terms i.e. *pramā* (the dimensions) and *pratimā* (icon) which are undoubtedly about form or icon with proper measures.

Another *Rk.10.155.3*² mentions a wooden icon (*dāru*) not of human (*apuruṣa*) floats on the water of the sea. Here, Sāyaṇa takes the term '*dāru*' to be 'wooden icon' and '*apuruṣam*' as '*devatāśarīram*' (form of divinity).

Chāndogya Upaniṣad appears to be one of the earliest sources to deal with iconic representation of Viṣṇu. The description of the therein about the Supreme One residing in the Sun is noteworthy: He is of golden hue from the tip of the nail to top; and he has golden beards and golden hairs.³ Moreover, the text mentions Him with the eyes resembling white lotus (*puṇḍarika*) expecting the rays of the sun.⁴ Puruṣa in these passages has been justified to be Nārāyaṇa by a number of passages from different sources. *Maitrāyaṇiya Upaniṣat*⁵ substantiates the above concept where it mentions the phrase '*dhruvaṁ viṣṇūsaṁjñītaṁ*.'

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣat describes the form of the Supreme Being as inner *atman* of all: *agni* (fire) is the head; *candra* (moon) and *sūrya* (sun) are the eyes; *diks* (directions) are ears; *Vedas* are the speech; *vāyu* (air) is *prāṇa* (vital

sthirebhiraṅgaiḥ pururūpa ugro babhruḥ śukrebhiḥ pipiṣe hiranyaiḥ /

¹ *Rk.10.130.3* (cf. *Parama saṁhitā*, Introduction, p.36)

kāsit pramā pratimā kim nidānaṁ ājyaṁ kimāsīt paridhiḥ ka āsit chandaḥ kimāsīt pra u gaṁ kimukthaṁ yaddevā devamayajanta viśve /

² *Rk.10.155.3* (cf. *Parama saṁhitā*, Introduction, p.35)

ado yaddāru plavate sindhoḥ pare apūruṣam / tadā rabhasva durhaṇo tea gaccha parastaram /

³ *Chāndogya.1.6.6:*

ya eṣo'ntarāditye hiraṇmayah puruṣo dṛśyate, hiranyaśmaśruḥ hiranyakeśaḥ āpranakhāt sarva eva suvarṇaḥ /

⁴ *Chāndogya.1.6.7:*

tasya yathā kapyāsaṁ puṇḍarikam evmakṣiṇi tasyoditi nāma sa eṣa sarvebhyah pāpmabhya uditah udeṭi ha vai sarvebhyah pāpmabhyah ya evaṁ veda /

⁵ *Maitrāyaṇiya.6.38:*

tataḥ paramamākāśāmatra hi saurasauṁyāgneyasātvikāni maṇḍalāni bhitvā tataśśuddhasattvāntaravasthamacalamamṛtaṁ dhruvaṁ viṣṇūsaṁjñītaṁ sarvādhāraṁ dhāma satyakāmasarvajñatvasaṁyuktaṁ svatantraṁ caitanyaṁ sve mahimni tiṣṭhamānaṁ paśyati atrodāharanti / ravimadhye sthitasomastasya madhye hutāśanaḥ / tejo madhye sthitaṁ sattvaṁ sattvamadhye sthito'cyutaḥ // śariraprādeśāmātramaṅguṣṭhamātramaṇorapyaṇutaraṁ dhyātaḥ paramatāṁ gacchati /

power); the *viśva* (universe) is the heart; and *pṛthvi* (earth) is pair of feet.¹ This passage talks not only about the universal form of Supreme Being but also explains one of his epithet ‘Vāsudeva’ as detailed in some of the sources like *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*² which states: He is known as Vāsudeva because He dwells in everything and everything dwell in Him. In *Mahābhārata*,³ Vāsudeva is justified to be Viṣṇu.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣat asserts that He, who possesses every side a number of hands, legs, eyes, heads, faces and ears, remains occupying everywhere.⁴ The same text asserts that such Lord remains in the cavity (*hṛdaya*) of every being.⁵

Patañjali, the commentator of *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini’s *Sūtra* (II.2.34), mentions a temple of Dhanapati, Rāma and Keśava where plausibly Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are referred to as Rāma and Keśava.

b. Concept of Icons in Early literature

As far as the classical literature is concerned, we find earliest reference in *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki that, after the marriage, the four sons of Daśaratha Viz. Rāma etc, the newly wedded women worshipped in the temples (*devatā-āyatanāni*).⁶ The *Mahābhārata*⁷ describes Nārāyaṇa, the creator of Brahmā, as

¹ *Mundaka*.2.1.4b:

*agnirmūrdhā cakṣuṣi candrasūryau diśaḥ śrotre vāgvivṛtāśca vedāḥ /
vāyuh praṇo hṛdayaṁ viśvamasya padbhyāṁ pṛthivī hyeṣa sarvabhūtāntarātmā //*

² *Viṣṇu purāṇa*.1.2.12b: (cf. MSS of BVV, p.56)

*sarvatṛāsau samastaṁ ca vasatyatreṭi vai yataḥ /
tatassa vāsudeveti vidvadbhiḥ paripāthyate //*

³ *Mbh* (*Ānuśāsanika*): (cf. MSS of BVV, p.56)

*vāsudevaṁ tathā viṣṇumātmānaṁca tathā viduḥ /
saṁjñābhedaḥ sa evaikassarvaśāstrābhisaṁstutaḥ //*

⁴ *Śvetāśvatara*.3.16:

*sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṁ tatsarvato’kṣīṣiromukham /
sarvataḥ śrutimalloke sarvamāvṛtya tiṣṭhati //*

⁵ *Śvetāśvatara*.3.11:

*sarvānanaśirogrivassarvabhūtaguhāśayaḥ /
sarvavyāpī sa bhagavān tasmāt sarvagataḥ śivaḥ //*

⁶ *Rāmāyaṇa*. (*Bāla*).77.13:

*devatāyatanānyāśu sarvāstāḥ pratyapūjayan /
abhivādyābhivādyāmśca sarvā rājasutāstadā //*

⁷ *Mahābhārata* (*Sabhā*).43.10-14 (Nirnaya Sagar Press Edition, 1906):

possessor of thousands of heads, faces, eyes, legs, hands, names, crowns, complexions and He is eternal, endless, ancient, omnipresent, omniscient, etc. this description is of Nārāyaṇa in the Viśvarūpa form. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*,¹ it is stated the Lord assumes His presence in the forms whatever His devotees prefer to worship and He receives whatever they offer.

In the *Ādiparvan* of *Mahābhārata*, Yudhiṣṭhira asks Kṛṣṇa, “Oh Lord, what are the benefits of *Vaiṣṇava dharma*s and what are they aim at? How are you worshipped and what are your manifest forms (for worship)? How do the followers of *Vaikhāṇasa* and *Pāñcarātra* speak of you?”²

A passage *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*³ describes Viṣṇu, “Oh Lord Puruṣottama, you are in iconic and uniconic form; you are visually not perceivable as well as visually perceivable. I bow down to you again and again.” this passage provides in nut-shell the very concept of iconic and iconoc presence of the Lord. This text mentions Viṣṇu to have the eyes like the white lotus (Puṇḍarikākṣa) and holding *śāṅkha*, *cakra* and *gadā*.⁴

*purā nārāyaṇo devaḥ svayambhūḥ prapitāmahaḥ /
sahasraśīrṣaḥ puruṣo dhruvo' nantaḥ sanātanaḥ //
sahasrāsyāḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasracaraṇo vibhuḥ /
sahasrabāhuḥ sarvajño devo nāmasahasravān //
sahasramakuto devo viśvarūpo mahādyutiḥ /
anekavarṇā devādiravyaktādvai pare sthitaḥ //
asṛjatsalilāṁ pūrvaṁ sa ca nārāyaṇaḥ prabhuḥ /
tatastu bhagavāṁstoye brahmāṇamasṛjatsvayam //*

¹ *Bhagavad Gītā*.7.21, 22:

*yo yo yām yām tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitumicchati /
tasya tasyācalāṁ śraddhāṁ tām eva vidadhāmyaham //
sa tayā śraddhayā yuktastasyārādhanamihate /
labhate ca tataḥ kāmān mayaiva vihitān hi tān //*

² MBh. (Ādi).104.83: (Nirnaya Sagar Press Edition):

*bhagavan vaiṣṇavā dharmāḥ kimphalāḥ kimparāyaṇāḥ /
kathāṁ tvamarcaniyo'si mūrtayaḥ kidṛśastu te /
vaikhāṇasā kathāṁ brūyuh kathāṁ vā pāñcarātrikāḥ //*

³ *Viṣṇu purāṇa*.1.4.24:

*mūrtāmūrtamadrśyaṅca drśyaṅca puruṣottama /
tatsarvatvaṁ namastubhyaṁ bhūyo bhūyo namo namaḥ //*

⁴ *Viṣṇu purāṇa*.1.4.12b:

*Namaste puṇḍarikākṣa śāṅkhacakraḡadādhara /
māmuddharāsmādyadyatvaṁ tvatto'ham pūrvamutthitā //*

*Narasimha Purāṇa*¹ justifies that the Divine Being in the middle of *Āditya-maṇḍala* is Viṣṇu, possessor of *śāṅkha*, *cakra* and *gadā*, who is worshipped by the divine beings (*sūri*) in *japa* (recitation) and *dhyāna* (contemplation). The text details: Nārāyaṇa, seated on *padmāsana* in the middle of *Savitṛ-maṇḍala* (*Sūrya-maṇḍala*), who has the ornaments viz. *keyūra*, *makara-kunḍala*, *kirīṭa* and *hāra*, whose complexion is of golden and holds *śāṅkha* and *cakra*, should be meditated upon ever.²

One can find a number of descriptions of Viṣṇu also in *Smṛtis*. *Viṣṇu smṛti* describes Viṣṇu as: Vāsudeva has *kirīṭa* (crown), *kunḍala* (ear-pendants), *gadā* (mace), *Śrīvatsa* and *Vanamālā*; He is benign (*saumya*) and holds *śāṅkha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *padma* in his four hands.³

Samvarta smṛti describes Viṣṇu in the middle of *Āditya-maṇḍala* with golden complexion.⁴ *Sanaka smṛti*⁵ details the same: in the middle of the vast *sūrya-maṇḍala* (circle of sun) endowed with thousands of rays and flames, there remains cool and soft *soma-maṇḍala* (circle of moon); within this, *agni-maṇḍala* remains with shining and sparkling sparks of flaming fire; there is seated Viṣṇu in *sukhāsana* style with his form with the dimension of four *aṅgulas*; He has

¹ *Narasimha Purāṇa*.62.16: (cf. MSS of BVV, p.42)
arcanti sūrayo nityaṁ japena ravimaṇḍale /
ādityamaṇḍale divyaṁ devadevamanāmayam /
śāṅkhacakraḡadāpāṇiṁ dhyātvā viṣṇumupāsate /

² *Narasimha Purāṇa*.62.17: (cf. MSS of BVV, p.42)
dhyeyassadā savitṛmaṇḍalamadhyavarṭi nārāyaṇassarasijāsanasanniviṣṭaḥ /
keyūravān makarakunḍalavān kirīṭi hāri hiraṇmayavapuḥ dhṛtaśāṅkhacakraḥ //

³ *Viṣṇu smṛti*.97.10:
bhagavantaṁ vāsudevaṁ kirīṭinaṁ kunḍalinaṁ gadināṁ śrīvatsāṅkaṁ vanamālā-
vibhūṣitoraskaṁ saumya-rūpaṁ caturbhujāṁ śāṅkhacakraḡadāpadmadharaṁ caraṇa-
madhyagatabhuvaṁ dhyāyet /

⁴ *Samvarta smṛti* (cf. MSS of BVV, p.33)
ādityamaṇḍalāntasthaṁ rukmābhaṁ puruṣaṁ param /
dhyāyejjapettadityetanniṣkāmo mucyate dvija //

⁵ *Sanaka smṛti* (cf. MSS of BVV, p.33):
raśmijvālāsahasrādhyaṁ maṇḍalaṁ vipulaṁ raveḥ /
tadantaḥ śītalābhaṁ tu saumyaṁ somasya maṇḍalam //
sphuratsphuliṅgamanalajvālāmālāsahasrakam /
tasya madhye sukhāsinaṁ taptahātakasannibham //
caturaṅgulamātraṁ (aṅguṣṭha) tu śukapatranibhāmbaram /
raktanetrāmbaram raktapāṇipādanakhāṁśukam /
śāṅkhacakraḡadāpāṇiṁ śrīvatsāṅkitavakṣasam /
evaṁ dhyātvā japenmantraṁ sāvitṛiṁ niyataḥ śuciḥ /

complexion of molten-gold and adorned with the garments in the colour of parrot's tail (yellow-green); His eyes, palms, feet and nails are red; He holds *śāṅkha*, *cakra* and *gadā* in his hands; and his chest is adorned with Śrīvatsa.

c. Concept of Icons in *Pañcarātra Āgamas*

The *Pañcarātra Āgamas* detail two types of worship i.e. *antar-yāga* and *bahir-yāga*. *Antar-yāga* is abstract form i.e. *japa* (recitation of holy syllables) and *dhyāna* (contemplation). *Bahir-yāga* means the worship in the forms visually perceived i.e. *maṇḍala* (mystic diagram), *agni-kunḍa*, *kumbha* (pitcher) and *bimba* (icon). Of them, *bahir-yāga* mainly focuses on the iconic worship. *Pārameśvara saṁhitā*¹ specifies the purpose of iconic worship as: by both *antar-yāga* and *bahir-yāga*, the worshipper becomes fit to achieve the Supreme One. However, the strong attachment and attraction (*vāsanā* etc) to mundane materials whatever remains since many births can be removed nullified only by the *bahir-yāga* mainly iconic worship.

*Śrīpraśna saṁhitā*² provides the information about the easy accessibility of iconic worship: the *yoga*, the means of attaining Him, is hard to achieve and it consists of plenty of obstacles; the humans, subject to self-problems such as anger, and enmity do not want to enter into this path which takes a quite a long time, the solution is provided there itself: Nārāyaṇa remains in the icon created and installed in a temple which is equal to His abode *Vaikuṇṭha* in the holy

¹ *Pārameśvara.6.4-6:*

*bāhyotthā vāsanā vipra bahujanmārjitā dṛdhā /
 lolikṛto'nyā hyātmā śuddho'śuddhasvarūpayā //
 yā mantraviṣayā śuddhā kriyāśāntasvarūpadā /
 samutthānavināśārtham tasyāḥ samparikirtitā //
 sa bāhyābhyāmantarābhyāṁ ca kriyābhyām tanmayo bhavet /
 dṛdhotthavāsanānāṁ ca tānavāṁ syācchanaiḥ śanaiḥ //*

² *Śrīpraśna.4.1-4a:*

*tvayā prokto yogasāro durlabhārthasya sādhanakāḥ /
 tathāpyeteṣu yogeṣu vighnān bahuvīdhān hare /
 anekakālasādhyāśca teṣu ko vā pravartate /
 prāyeṇa jantavo loke kāmakrodhaparāyaṇāḥ //
 tasmādimāṁ parityajya mārgaṁ loke hitāya vai /*

places; if one worships His icon in the temple or house, He remain with Śrī and offers whatever His devotee desire.¹

*Pauṣkara saṁhitā*² enlightens as: for the benefit of the people of both who expect any return or otherwise, the Supreme One enters in every temple and He remains well in every icons.

*Nāradiya saṁhitā*³ informs about the benefit (*phalaśruti*) of installation of icon is: one who installs (or donates) the icon of Viṣṇu will possess his undecaying worlds for life; and the benefit is beyond the description even for the period of thousands and thousands of years.

According to the *Pārameśvara saṁhitā*,⁴ an icon made of materials like metal and stone and possessing all attributes and characteristics is meant for the achievement of the self. The icon must possess pleasant attitude, good face, good sight, good chin, all good limbs and the appearance must be smiling/benign, thus states *Nāradiya saṁhitā*.⁵

¹ Śrīpraśna.4.7b-11:

niṣkāmo vā sakāmo vā vaikuṇṭhopamamandiram //
punyakṣetre purā kṛtvā tvayā saha sumadhyame //
arcārūpaṁ pāñcarātravidhinā sarvakāmadam //
mantramūrtiṁ pratiṣṭhāpya mandirāntargataṁ harim //
tacchāstroktiṁ purā dikṣāṁ kṛtvā deśikasattamaḥ //
pūjayedyadi madbimbaṁ vedavedāṅgapāragah //
grhe vāpi pratiṣṭhāpya nityaṁ pūjayate yadi //
aham tadbimbamāviśya bhaktānāmiṣṭasādhakah //
tvayā saha bhaviṣyāmi nātra sandeha astu te //

² Pauṣkara.36.80:

phalakāmaphalepsūnāṁ niṣkāmanām hi pauṣkara //
sarvāyatanago devaḥ sarvamūrtiṣvavasthitaḥ //

³ Nāradiya.13.174-175:

evamvidhā dvijaśreṣṭha viṣṇoradbhudakarmanah //
pratimā sthāpitā yena tasya lokāḥ sadākṣayāḥ //
na mayā varṇitūṁ śakyam varṣāyutaśāitairapi //
eṣā sādharmaṇā proktā pratimā puruṣakṛtiḥ //

⁴ Pārameśvara.6.26:

sarvopakaraṇopetāṁ sarvalakṣaṇasaṁyutām //
prātimāṁ dhātupāṣāṇanirmatāmātmasiddhaye //

⁵ Nāradiya.13.173:

suprasannā suvaktrā ca sudṛṣṭiḥ sukapolakā //
sarvāvayavasampūrṇā hasantīva śubheḥṣaṇā //

Regarding the material for the icons and the temples, *Śrīpraśna saṁhitā*¹ speaks of the different temples and icons: all beings from the divinities to humans pray to Nārāyaṇa in the form of icon and they create temples according to their level; the divinities (*deva*) want the temple in good places and the *siddhas* on the peak of hills; Viśvakarmā, the celestial architect, creates golden temples in the worlds of *devas* for the benefit of the *devas*; he creates temples for also the *siddhas*. The great sages create temples in the forests out of stone; and the humans create the temples in the villages and towns using baked bricks (*pakva-iṣṭakā*) and stone.

d. Concept of Icons in *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*

Both the eyes and the mind are delighted through the worship of the icons and remembrance of the Lord.² Kāśyapa highlights the value of visual perception in the form of icon: even the deities like Brahmā who cannot perceive the full form of Viṣṇu draw His form in their minds with the help of the brush in the form of *bhakti* and, later on, they perceive Him and meditate upon Him.³

¹ *Śrīpraśna.5.3b-7:*

devā maharṣayaḥ siddhāḥ manuṣyāścārcitum rame //
prārthayisyanti mām devi bimbarūpiṇamadbhutam /
madarthamālayaṁ cāpi tasya tasyānurūpataḥ //
devāḥ sāttvikadeśeṣu siddhāḥ parvatamūrdhani /
devānāṁ devalokeṣu mandīraṁ kanakādibhiḥ //
viśvakarmā kalpayati siddhānāmapī cālayam /
maharṣayastvaranyeṣu tapasā ca śilāmayaiḥ //
kalpayantyālayaṁ devi manujā grāmapattane /
pakveṣṭakāśilābhiḥ ca racayanti ca śilpibhiḥ //

² *KJK.1, p.3:*

saṁūrte cakṣurmanasoḥ prītiḥ sadā saṁsmṛtiṣca / tābhyāṁ bhaktiśraddhe syātām /
śraddhābhaktiyutasyaiva sarvasaṁsiddhiḥ //

KRA.1.13-14a:

cakṣuṣaḥ prītikaraṇānmanaso hṛdayasya ca /
prītyā sañjāyate bhaktirbhaktasya sulabho hariḥ //
tasmātrayānāmeteṣāṁ berapūjā viśiṣyate //

³ *KJK.51, p.91:*

brahmādayo'pi tadrūpalakṣaṇāniscayaṁ jñātumaśaktāścittabhittau tadrūpaṁ
bhaktitūlikayā saṅkalpya varṇairālikhyālokayanti / tasmādbhaktireva kāraṇam /
tatrāto'bhikṣṇadarśanayogyam tat bhagavadrūpaṁ kalpayet //

Worship in iconic form (*arcā*) is the easiest form of Viṣṇu to please and to satisfy the devotees. The Lord, out of compassion, resides in the icon, *kūrca* (made of *darbha* grass) and water (in the pitcher) and receives the worship of the ardent devotees, states Atri.¹

Of the four modes of Viṣṇu's worship viz. *japa* (practice of mantras), *huta* (sacrificial rituals in fire), *dhyāna* (contemplation through *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*) and *arcana* (iconic worship), the *arcana* yields all the results, thus advocates Marīci.²

The Supreme One Viṣṇu is worshipped in two modes i.e. *amūrta* (uniconic in fire) and *samūrta* (iconic).³ The *samūrta* (iconic) worship is greater than *amūrta* (uniconic) worship. The *amūrta* worship, concerned with only the *yajamāna* (performer), cannot survive in the absence of the doer, and, therefore, all efforts become vain. *Samūrta* (iconic) worship continues for generations even after the doer perishes. Therefore, the iconic worship is preferred.⁴

¹ SAA.31.66b-67a:

mantrairāvāhite deve sthale kūrce jale'thavā //
bhaktānukampayā sthitvā pūjām grhṇāti pūjitaḥ //

² VAK.95, p.508-509:

athā bhagavatsamāśrayaṇam caturvidham bhavati (samārāadhanamityāmananti) japa-
hutārcaṇādhyānamiti / ... pratimādiṣu pūjayet tadarcanam / ... teṣvarcanam sarvārtha-
sādhanaṁ syāt //

³ KJK.1, p.3:

dvidvidham tadarcanamākhyātam amūrtaṁ samūrtañceti / taditthamagnau hutama-
mūrtaṁ samūrtaṁ tadbimbe'rcanam //

SAA.1.28b-29a:

amūrteti samūrteti dvidvidhā sārcaṇā matā //
amūrtāgnyāhutiḥ proktā samūrtā pratimārcaṇā //

YAJ.1.10:

tadarcanam dvidhā proktamamūrtaṁ ca samūrtakam //
agnau hutamamūrtaṁ syātsamūrtaṁ berapūjanam //

⁴ KJK.1, p.3:

ālaye samūrtārcaṇam balyutsavādyupacārayogāt sampūrṇam / yajamānā-
bhāve'pyavicchedānnityaṇca //

KLA.1.30b-31a:

atraiva sakalikṛtya viṣṇumārādhayanti ye //
te labdhasarvakāmāśca tato muktīm samāpnuyuḥ //

KRA.1.15:

balyutsavādibhirdivyaiḥ pūrṇatvātsarvavigrahaiḥ //
pramīte yajamāne'pi tvavicchinna pravartanāt //

Agnihotra (*agni-ārādhana*) is admissible to the *dvijas* (twice-born) whereas iconic worship is meant for also to ones ineligible for *agni-kārya*. Five iconic forms of Viṣṇu in the temple are equal to five types of *agni* (fire) meant for daily worship.¹ The three types of icons installed in the sanctum represent *Tretāgni* (three-fold fire) of the domestic purpose.²

Kāśyapa asserts that one who is the *yajamāna* (donor) of any of the five i.e. temple, *dhruva-bera*, *kautuka-bera*, consecration of icons and renovation, gets the status of Viṣṇu and gets established in the world of Viṣṇu i.e. *Mokṣa*;³ such person casts off his mundane body in the world, gets a divine form with four arms holding *cakra* and *śaṅkha*, gets the complexion of *śyāmala*, is adorned with Śrīvatsa, mounts on Vainateya (Garuḍa) and reaches the world of Viṣṇu, from where no one returns.⁴

All aforementioned passages right from the time of *Vedas* do have iconographical details of Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa, more or less, and they have paved the way of the development of *Vaiṣṇava* iconography. The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*, both *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa*, did not commence the iconographical concepts but they systematically sustained the earlier concepts of iconography

VAK.1, p.5:

*tadārāadhanam dvividham – amūrtam samūrtamiti agnau hutamamūrtam
pratimārāadhanam samūrtam, tacchreṣṭham yajamānābhāve'pi avicchinnam bhavati /*

YAJ.1.11:

*amūrtam yajamānasya hyabhāve ca vinaśyati /
acchinnaṁ śāśvataṁ nityam pratimārāadhanam param //*

¹ VAS.3.176b-177a:

*viṣṇuṁ ca puruṣaṁ satyamacyutaṁ cāniruddhakam //
tathava pañcadhā vahniṁ śuddhiṁ caiva tu pañcamam /*

² PRA.25.107:

*grhe tretāgnivannityam praṇiyāropanam vinā /
śnapanotsavabhede tu kautukena dinam dinam //*

³ KJK.20, p.37:

*vimānamahāberakautukabimbasthāpananavakarmakartāraḥ pañcaite viṣṇurūpadharā
viṣṇuloke pratiṣṭhitaḥ /*

⁴ KJK.20, p.37:

*pratiṣṭhite tyaktvā kalevaram sadyaḥ śaṅkhacakraadharāḥ śyāmalāṅgaścaturbhujāḥ
śrīvatsavaḥśāḥ bhūtvā vainateyabhujamārūḍhaḥ sarvadevanamskṛtaḥ sarvān
lokānatīyāsaḥ viṣṇoḥ sāyujyamāpnuyāt / anyalokagatāssarve punarāvartinaḥ viṣṇu-
lokatānām nāstyāvṛttiḥ /*

and they still remain as canonical treatises so that utmost care is taken also based on the religious and philosophical aspects.

3.7. Treatises under study

Vaikhānasa works consulted in the study of the icons of Viṣṇu are – *Kāśyapa-Jñānakāṇḍa*, *Khilādhikāra*, *Kriyādhikāra*, *Prakīrṇādhikāra*, *Vāsādhikāra*, *Yajñādhikāra*, *Samūrtārcanādhikaraṇa* and *Vimānārcanākalpa*.

Pāñcarātra treatises consulted are - *Sātvata saṁhitā*, *Pauṣkara saṁhitā*, *Pādma saṁhitā*, *Īśvara saṁhitā*, *Pārameśvara saṁhitā*, *Parama saṁhitā*, *Nāradya saṁhitā*, *Śrīpraśna saṁhitā*, and so on.

Following the instruction of the *Āgamic* treatises that the treatises on *Śilpāsāstra* (sculpture) and *Vāstuśāstra* (architecture) should be consulted to understand and interpret many technical terms, the study includes some other works such as *Brāhmīya-citrakarmaśāstra*, *Sārasvatīya-citrakarmaśāstra*, *Kāśyapaśilpāsāstra*, *Sakalādhikāra*, *Śilparatna* and *Mānasollāsa* (*Abhilaṣitārthacintāmaṇi*) and *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*.

CHAPTER IV

ĀGAMAS: ICONOMETRY AND MATERIALS

4.1. Terminology

The treatises of both the *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa Āgamas* extensively deal with the technical features on temple art and architecture. Sometimes, they detail certain stance or pose but do not mention the technical term; the same way, they do mention the technical term but hardly describe them. For instance, the *Pādma samhitā*, a detailed work of *Pāñcarātra* tradition, describe the hand holding the attributes *cakra* and *śaṅkha*.¹ The hand-pose is obviously *kartarīmukha* but the term ‘*kartarīmukha*’ is not found therein in the particular context. The term ‘*kaṭyavalambita*’ (*kaṭi-hasta* or *ūru-hasta*) is found in the texts but details are not provided.

Both the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamic* traditions commend: a *śilpin* (sculptor), *sthapati* (architect) and *ācārya* (preceptor), while proposing to create an icon or temple, should decide many things following the norms of technical sciences (*śāstras*) thoughtfully and skillfully. Perhaps, the *Āgamic* traditions, high authority on temple art and religio-spiritual aspects, provide additional guidelines in order to achieve the high perfection based on the religious and spiritual injunctions.

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*. 20.82, 84, 89:

kaṭisprśam karaṁ kuryāt prasavyaṁ gadayā vinā /
uddhredbāhusimāntamūrdhvahastau dhṛtāyusau //
ūrdhve hastadvayāṅguṣṭhe sahānāmikayā natam /
tarjanīmadhyamābhyāṁ tu dhārayantaṁ (dhāryam cakram) tathāmbujam //
pradakṣiṇāvartayutaṁ jvālāgraṁ śaṅkhacakrayoḥ /
keśāntena samaṁ yadvā netrasūtreṇa tatsamam //
The various reading ‘*dhāryam cakram*’ for ‘*dhārayantaṁ*’ is apt here.

Therefore, in order to study and understand the iconography of the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*, is inevitable to consult the treatises on dance (*nāṭya-śāstra*), sculpture (*śilpa-śāstra*) and architecture (*sthāpatya* or *vāstu-śāstra*).

As far as the definitions and application of some terms, especially in case of iconometry, one should also consider the icon with reference to the time of its creation. That is why the treatises offer a little liberty to the sculptor that the difference of measurement may be upto four *yavas*.¹ It is well observed, "There are some terms to be defined with reference to context, based on grammatical aspects of the language and modes of interpretation. For instance, one can take the phrase '*vrkṣadaṇḍāyudha*', a compounded phrase of three words, *vrkṣa* (tree), *daṇḍa* (trunk or club) and *āyudha* (weapon). In this phrase of *bahuvrihi* compound, the word *āyudha* is common one. The words *vrkṣa* and *daṇḍa* can be taken as two different objects resulting in two different attributes (*āyudha*). In case the term '*vrkṣa*' is taken as an adjective qualifying '*daṇḍa*' meaning 'trunk of tree', the attribute is one with 'weapon in the form of tree-trunk'. The term '*daṇḍa*' is sometimes taken to mean the attribute *gadā*. As the phrase is adjective qualifying the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, both the meanings are applicable. For, the powerful demons are described to use anything as their weapon. In the sculptural panel of Anantaśāyin, it appears better if these two demons are depicted with club (*gadā* or *daṇḍa*) rather a huge trunk of the tree, balancing the aesthetic appearance of the panel."²

Obviously, it is essential to discuss and define the technical terms found in the *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra* treatises with the help of other earlier and contemporary works on art and architecture and performing arts as well. The terms in major classifications are the *mudrā* or *hasta* (hand gestures), *pīṭha* (pedestals), *āsana* and *sthāna* (postures), *āyudha* (attributes or weapons), *vastra* (garments), *makuṭa* (crowns), *keśa-bandha* (hair-styles) and *ābharana* (ornaments).

¹ *Yava* is a small unit that is 1/8 of an *aṅgula*.

² K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, pp.24-25.

Some of the non-āgamic technical treatises referred here are - *Brāhmīya-citrakarmaśāstra*, *Sārasvatiya-citrakarmaśāstra*, *Sakalādhikāra*, *Kāśyapaśilpa* and *Mayamata* as well as the treatises on dance (*nṛtta-śāstra*). *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* asserts that the physical features and expressions such as glances, *hastas* / *mudrās*, postures and poses are same in both the *śilpaśāstra* and *nāṭya-śāstra*.¹

4.1.1. *Hasta* and *mudrā* (hand gestures)

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamic* treatises mention a number of *hastas* and *mudrās* related to the iconic representation of Viṣṇu. However, in the study of the metal icons of Viṣṇu deposited in the Museum, only the *mudrās* and *hastas* (hand-poses) used in the icons alone are described here with reference to *Āgamic* prescriptions.

The hand gestures are called invariably as *mudrā* or *hasta*. The hand-gestures called *hasta* or *mudrā* symbolizes some meaning and they play an important role in sculptures as well as dancing and rituals.

The *hastas* or *mudrās* found in the *Pāñcarātra* texts are two types – a) used for ritualistic purposes and b) applied in the iconography. The former is meant for the invocation of the divinities and invocation of the special features in the divine forms both manifest (iconic representation) and unmanifest (pitcher, diagram, and fire altar). The latter is of three types – a) to convey some meaning, b) functional (holding attribute), and, c) for beautification and aesthetic balance.

Regarding the clarification of the terms *hasta* and *mudrā*, Banerjea observes, “The technical term, used in the texts to denote these poses, is *mudrā*; sometimes the word *hasta* is also used to denote one or other of these hand-

¹ VDP.III.35.5b-7a.

*yathā nṛtte tathā citre trailokyānukṛtiśmṛtā /
dṛṣṭayaśca tathā bhāvā āṅgapāṅgāni sarvaśaḥ /
karaṇāśca ye matā nṛtte pūrvoktā nṛpasattama /
ta eva citre vijñeyā nṛttam citram param matam /*

poses. The latter is generally used in cases where the whole of the arm along with the hand is shown in a particular pose (cf. *daṇḍahasta*, *gajahasta*, *kaṭihasta*, etc.), while the former usually denotes the peculiar posture in which the palm with the fingers is shown (cf. *jñānamudrā*, *cinmudrā* or *vyākhyānamudrā*, *yoga*- or *dhyāna-mudrā*, etc.). It must be observed, however, that sometimes, though comparatively rarely, both the terms are used in the texts to signify particular hand-poses; thus, in iconographic parlance, *abhaya-mudrā* and *abhaya-hasta* and *varada-mudrā* and *varada-hasta* are equally appropriate.”¹

There are some terms used in *Vaikhānasa* texts indicating two or more definitions. For instance, the word *daṇḍa-hasta* means both ‘the hand in a specific gesture’ as well as ‘the hand holding a *gadā* (club)’. Such definitions must be taken by the *śilpācārya* or *sthapati* with reference to context. One can safely conclude that the term *hasta* may mean both a functional gesture holding any attribute/weapon (*āyudha*) as well as signifying certain meaning whereas the term *mudrā* means signifying different meanings like fearlessness, charity etc.

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamic* treatises refer to two types of *hastas* or *mudrās* viz. *saṁyuta* (combined) i.e. using both the hands and *asaṁyuta* i.e. using one hand. One can find a number of hand gestures in these texts out of the well-known thirty-two major hand poses, twelve hand movements and twenty-four combined hand poses. The hand poses are classified as functional i.e. holding any attribute or conveying some significant meaning. The gestures like *abhaya*, *varada* and *dāna* etc. convey some special meaning whereas the hand gestures like *kartarīmukha* and *kaṭaka* hold the attributes. The hand gestures like *dola-hasta* beautify or to balance the icon or the posture. In the icon in one of the three *sthitakuñcita*² stances, the hand hangs along the body to balance the icon as well as to add aesthetic appearance.

¹ J.N. Banerjea, *DHI*, p.246-247.

² K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.34:

The treatises of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* prescribe a variety of such *mudrās* but they hardly describe them. However, the sections on iconometry in these works clearly prescribe the distance of placement of the *mudrā/hasta* with reference to the *brahma-sūtra* (middle plumb-line) or any relevant part of the body of the icon.

The study of the *hastas* and *mudrās* are confined to the metal icons of the Government Museum, Chennai are taken here for detailed research. In such, the relevant *mudrās* are *abhaya*, *varada*, *dāna*, *kaṭaka*, *śiṃhakarṇa*, *āhūyavarada*, *kaṭinyasta* (*kaṭyavalambita*, *kaṭyālambita* and *kaṭihasta*), *kartarimukha*, *ūruhasta*, *añjali*, *ūru-hasta* and *pallava*.

Abhaya-hasta conveys fearlessness and benign concept. This symbolizes the assurance of fearlessness, tranquillity and protection given by the deity to his worshipper. This hand pose is very common in the icons of Indian deities. The right hand, displayed palm outward with the fingers raised, remains turned towards the onlooker. This is mainly on the lower right hand. This pose is also referred to as *patāka-hasta* in. The *Pādma saṃhitā*¹ states that the tip of the middle finger must be to the level of



Fig.9. *Abhaya-hasta*

stana-sūtra with the distance of 12 *aṅgulas* from the breast-nut (*stana-cūcuka*). A lotus stem should be present between the *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī*. According to

“There are found three types of *sthānaka* postures with reference to the flexions of the parts of the body. This is known as *bhaṅga*, based on the loss of height in the sense of lowering it on vertical plane, resulting from keeping the legs at three different distances in which also the head and other parts of the body are naturally deviated sideward from the *brahma-sūtra* (middle plumb-line). They are *ābhaṅga*, *sambhaṅga* and *atibhaṅga* in which the *natamāna* (loss of height vertically) is three, four and five *aṅgulas* respectively. In *sthita-kuñcita* pose, one foot is planted straightly and firmly on the pedestal and another foot is placed on the pedestal with a slight bend at the knee hence the name.”

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*, 20.77-78:

abhitido vā varado mukhyo vāmetarah karaḥ /
stana-sūtrasamaṁ kāryaṁ aṅgulyagraṁ karasya tu //
tayorbhavedantarālaṁ dvādaśaṅgulamabjaja /
aṅguṣṭhatarjanimadhye sanālaṁ kamalaṁ bhavet //

Pāñcarātra concept the *śaṅkha* and *cakra* are held in upper hands, the *gadā* is held in the lower left hand and another important attribute *padma* is to be held in the lower right hand. Obviously this *saṁhitā* specifies both *abhaya* and lotus together to accommodate both the concepts, i.e., *abhaya-mudrā* for fearlessness and *padma* for which is mandatory in *Pāñcarātra* concept. Insertion of the lotus stem in the *abhaya-hasta* without disturbing the position of *abhaya-hasta* portrays the skill of the sculptor besides expressing aesthetic beauty and benign (*saumya*) nature of the deity. This can be noticed in the icons of Government Museum, Chennai (Accn.Nos.4, 7, 97/48 and 625/68)

According to *Vimānārcanākalpa*¹ of Marīci, in the *abhaya-hasta*, the tip of the middle finger must be at the level of breast nut of the icon at the distance of thirteen *aṅgulas*. *Sārasvatīyacitrakarmasāstra*,² an authentic *śilpa* treatise, also speaks of the same distance. Moreover, this text prescribes:³ “The middle line (*madhya-rekhā*) of the palm must be at the distance from *madhya-sūtra* by thirteen to seventeen *aṅgulas*. The middle of elbow must be at the distance of 16 to 18 *aṅgulas* from the *madhya-sūtra*. The elbow must be at 5½ or 6 *aṅgulas* from the side of body at *śronī* level.”⁴

Patāka-hasta is almost same as *abhaya-mudrā* but the hand kept away horizontally. Walker describes ‘the open palm upright, usually facing the spectator, fingers close together and pointing upward, thumb slightly bent inwards to touch the lower side of the forefinger.’⁵ (Accn. Nos.449/60 and 500/65). In some of the icons of the Museum, this hand is found treated as *abhaya-mudrā* and the lotus stem with small bud is inserted (Accn. No.3).

¹ VAK.22, p.160:

abhayahastasya madhyāṅgulāccūcukāntaṁ trayodaśaṅgulaṁ

This is applicable for the icon in *samapāda-sthānaka*.

² SCS.14.31a.

³ SCS.14.29b-30; SCS.15.50-51

⁴ K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.36.

⁵ Benjamin Walker, *Hindu world*, Vol.II p.86

Varada-mudrā is like *abhaya-mudrā* but turned downward hanging loose, signifying benevolent nature of the deities' charity. *Pādma samhitā*¹ uniquely prescribes that a lotus should be drawn on the palm. This *mudrā* which is normal on the lower left hand is mentioned on the lower right hand in place of *abhaya-hasta* or *svāgata-hasta*.²



Fig.10. Varada-hasta

The fingers may remain half closed. In general, this hand gesture is prescribed on the lower left hand parallel to the lower right hand especially bearing *abhaya-hasta* to balance both sides of the body of the icon (Accn. No.14). The pair of *abhaya* and *varada* is less found in icons comparable to the pair of *abhaya - āhūyavarada* (Accn. Nos.15, 57/39, 371/55, 571/66 and 1888/96), *abhaya-kaṭyavalambita* (Accn. Nos.26, 109/49, 328/55, 473/52, 553/55 and 569/66). In some icons, *varada-mudrā* is also held in the lower right hand. This is one of the common hand gestures shown almost in all icons of the deities in Indian religions. This hand pose may be on any side but obviously the lower hand. Walker observes that the *patāka* with the hand pointing downwards, palms towards the spectator, fingers stretched and sloping downwards as if offering something is the *varada*, signifies the bestowing of gifts. According to *Vimānārcanākalpa*,³ the tip of middle finger of left hand must be at the distance of six *aṅgulas* from *medhra*. The *Sārasvatīyacitrakarmasāstra*⁴ prescribe the same distance, with the position of tip of the middle finger at the lower level of

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.79a:

varade kamalākāraṁ likhet karatalodare /

² *Nāradya*.13.181b:

aṅguṣṭhatarjanimadhye kamalam śubhamunmukham /

³ *VAK*.22, p.160:

vāmahastasya madhyamāṅgulānmedhrāntaram ṣaḍaṅgulam

⁴ *SCS*.14.34a.

śronī. The same text asserts that the edge of *maṇibandha* (*prṣṭha*) must be at navel level if this gesture is on the left side.¹

Dāna-hasta, indicating charity, resembles *varada-hasta* but normally in the lower right hand in place of *abhaya-hasta*. It slightly differs from *varada-hasta* in inter-space (*upamāna*) and description. Liebert observes, 'the hand in this pose hangs loose, the palm outwards with all the fingers outstretched; the hand may also be half closed'. This gesture is common generally on the lower right hand in southern part of Tamil Nadu (Accn. Nos.26, 1241/87 and 1472/88).

Kaṭaka-hasta resembles almost the side part of crab. This is a common pose in the sculptures of female deities like Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī holding flower in it. In this gesture, the top of fist must be at the level of breast-nut of the deity in case the hand is in a position to hold any object like flower. In the icon of Viṣṇu, this gesture the lower hand almost parallel to *abhaya* or *varada* held in other lower hand (Accn. Nos. 5/01, 459/61, 554/66 and 555/66). According to *Kāśyapaśilpaśāstra*,² in *kaṭaka* pose, all the fingers, right from little finger to index finger, remain bent and the thumb is bent a little. As per *Sārasvatīyacitrakarmasāstra*,³ in the seated icon, the wrist must be at the distance of four or five *aṅgulas* from the mid-thigh; in such gesture, the wrist must be at the level of upper part of hip (*kaṭi*)⁴.

This *kaṭaka-hasta* is prescribed in different positions for different icons in *Vaiṣṇava Āgamic* treatises. In the icon of Rājagopāla, the *kaṭaka-hasta* is near the hip which holds *kriḍāyaṣṭi* (sportive staff).⁵ In the icon of Sītā, as per Marīci,



Fig.11. *Kaṭaka-hasta*

¹ SCS.15.48a.

² KSS.64.12b-13a.

³ SCS.14.36b.

⁴ SCS.14.33.

⁵ PRA.16.12b:

dakṣiṇaṁ kaṭakaṁ hastaṁ kriḍāyaṣṭisamanvitam //

the upper tip of the *kaṭaka* must be to the level of breast-nut (*stana-akṣa*); the distance between wrist (*maṇibandha*) and *nābhi* is $13\frac{1}{2}$ *aṅgulas*; and, the distance between the side of the body and the middle of the arm is seven *aṅgulas*.¹ In the icon of Rāma, the right hand with *kaṭaka* holding the arrow remains at the level of *meḍhra-sūtra*.² In the icon of Balarāma, the left hand with this gesture holding the attribute *hala* (plough) remains at the level of *bāhu-sūtra*; and, the right hand with this gesture holding *musala* (pestle) is at the height of *śronī-sūtra*.³

In *simhakarṇa-mudrā*, according to *Kāśyapaśilpaśāstra*,⁴ the middle finger remains bent and reaches the middle of the palm; the ring finger is half-bent; and other fingers are slightly bent. In general, this gesture, especially the index finger and little finger, resembles the lion's ear. As per Liebert, this *mudrā* resembling the lion's ear signifies the hand pose of the right hand having just released the bowstring when shooting-off an arrow, this pose being very similar to that of holding a flower in *kaṭaka-mudrā*.⁵ Gopinatha Rao holds that both *kaṭaka* and *simhakarṇa* gestures are identical.⁶ However, the *simhakarṇa-mudrā* differs from *kaṭaka-mudrā* with reference to the position of the fingers.



Fig. 12. *Simhakarṇa*

¹ VAK.58 p.377:

*kaṭakāgrasyotsedhaṁ stanākṣasamaṁ nābhermaṇibandhāntaraṁ sārddhatrayo-
daśaṅgulam pārśvamadhyabāhvantaram saptaṅgulam* (sita's)

² VĀS.20.33b:

*vāme dhanuṣkaraṁ caiva dakṣiṇe sāyakottamam /
sūtrameḍhrasamaṁ bāṇaṁ kaṭakaṁ hastamācaret //*

³ VĀS.21.7-8a:

*musalaṁ dakṣiṇe haste dhāriṇaṁ vāmake halaṁ /
śronīsūtrasamenaiva muṣṭinā musalaṁ dhṛḍham //
sūtrabāhusamaṁ kuryāddhalaṁ vāme tathaiva ca /*

⁴ KSS.64.13b-14a.

⁵ Liebert, *op. cit.*, p.270

⁶ T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *EHI*, Vol. I pt.1 p.15.

Āhūya-varada-hasta almost resembles the *simhakarṇa-mudrā*. This gesture indicates both the invitation (*āhvāna*) and charity (*varada*). Liebert¹ states that this resembles *kaṭaka-mudrā* but which displays a quarter of the degree of turning shown therein so that the upper side of the hand is turned upwards. Thus, it has much the same meaning as the *varada-mudrā*, though not resembling that hand pose. This gesture is found in the sculptures of South India alone. The hand is displayed palm outward, turned towards the worshipper with the fingers raised. In many icons, this gesture is shown on the left side, balancing *abhaya-mudrā* on the right. This is typical in south Indian sculptures especially of Pallavas and their contemporaries viz. Pāṇḍyas, Muttaraiyars and Atiyas.

Kartarimukha-hasta is a unique hand posture in upper hands in four or multi-armed icons have this h attributes. The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* do not mention thi However, the *śilpa* treatises mention this. In *Nāṭya-ś* resembling the pair of scissors or cutting tool signifie: *saṁhitā*² and *Nāradiya saṁhitā*,³ while describing pos *cakra* on the upper hands, detail this gesture: *aṅguṣṭh* (ring finger) must be bent and brought together. *Ta*



Fig.13. *Karatrimukha*

madhyama (middle finger) combined together hold together the *śaṅkha* and *cakra*. In this the upper part should be raised to the shoulder level. In such, the tip of the flame of the *śaṅkha* and *cakra* must be to the level of *keśānta* (hairline) or *netrasūtra* (eye-line). *Kāśyapaśilpaśāstra*⁴ prescribes that the ring

¹ Liebert, *op. cit.* p.7.

² *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.82, 84, 89:

*kaṭisprśam karaṁ kuryāt prasavyaṁ gadayā vinā /
uddhredbāhusimāntamūrdhvahastau dhṛtāyusau //
ūrdhve hastadvayāṅguṣṭhe sahānāmikayā natam /
tarjanimadhyamābhyāṁ tu dhārayantaṁ tathāmbujam //
pradakṣiṇāvartayutaṁ jvālāgram śaṅkhacakrayoh /
keśāntena samāṁ yadvā netrasūtreṇa tatsamam //*

³ *Nāradiya*.13.179b-180a:

*tarjanimadhyamāmadhye kuryāccakraṁ suśobhanam //
śaṅkhaṁ tathāvidhe vāme jvālānekasamnvitam /*

⁴ *KSS*.64.15-16a.

finger and the thumb remain bent touching each other and press against the palm of the hand. The little finger is slightly bent. The index and middle fingers are stretched upwards, holding an attribute between the index and middle fingers in which index and ring fingers resemble open pair (mouth) of scissors (*kartari*). Generally, the backhands are represented with this gesture holding any attributes like *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *paraśu*, *padma*, *kamaṇḍalu*, etc. in this hand gesture.¹ In this gesture the tip of the middle finger stretched upward should be equal to the level of *hikkā-sūtra*. The distance between the *maṇibandha* (wrist) and the outer side of the upper part of arm is eight *aṅgulas*; the distance between *uṣṇīṣa* and *śaṅkha/cakra* is twelve *aṅgulas*, and the elbow must be at the distance of six *aṅgulas* from the side part of mid-belly (*madhya-udara*), thus Marīci² defines the position of the hand with *kartarimukha*.

Kartarimukha-hasta is found created in different types in the icons taken under study. The treatises describe the *kartarimukha*, but they do not mention which side the palm should be turned to. In some icons, the palm faces the onlooker and in some, the palm is turned sidewise. One may feel the placement of *prayoga-cakra* on the fingers is the plausible reason (Accn. No.917/78). However, normal *cakra* is found in the *kartarimukha* with palm turned sidewise. In few icons, the hand bears *kartarimukha* but *śaṅkha* and *cakra* are held in the fingers rather placed on the tip of *tarjanī* and *madhyamā* (Accn. Nos.20 and 17). In the icon of Viṣṇu from Olayakkunnam (Accn. No.503/65), the *kartarimukha* is differently used in which the *śaṅkha* and *cakra* appear as if they are placed on *anāmikā* and *tarjanī*. In the icon of Viṣṇu from Mangammalpuram (Accn. No.554/66), all the three fingers *kaniṣṭhikā*, *anāmikā* and *madhyamā* are bent, *tarjanī* is straight and the flame of *cakra* remains between the *tarjanī* and *aṅguṣṭha*. In the icon of Palani (Accn. No. 94-5/48), the

¹ According to *Kāśyapa-śilpāśāstra* (64.16b), the elbow must be near the side of *śronī* at the distance of five to seven *aṅgulas*.

² VAK.22 p.160:

*parabhuḥjasya maṇibandhāntaramaṣṭāṅgulaṃ uṣṇīṣaśaṅkhacakraṅtaraṃ mukhaṃ
madhyodarāt kūparāntaṃ ṣaḍaṅgulaṃ*

As per *Sārasvatīya-citrakarmasāstra* (14.37b-39a), the distance may be 8 or 10 *aṅgulas*.

palm of the *kartarimukha* faces upwards, probably to adjust the *pallava-mudrā* in lower right hand holding a lotus. In the icon of Avidi (Accn. No. 83/44), the *kartarimukha* is created in a natural way i.e. the combination of *kartarimukha* and three fingers to hold the stem of the *śaṅkha* and *cakra* as if holding the stem of lotus.

Kaṭihasta is generally known as *kaṭiga*, *kaṭistha*, *kaṭisaṁsthita* *kaṭyālabhana* and *kaṭyavalambita*. The hand remains bent a little at the elbow and placed on the upper part of the waist. This gesture is generally found on the lower left hand. *Pādma saṁhitā*¹ prescribes, while holding *gadā*; the hand should be two *aṅgulas* away from the hip of the icon. According to *Nāradya saṁhitā*, the palm of the hand holding *gadā* must be to the level of *kaṭisūtra*.² In the absence of *gadā*, the hand remains touching the hip³ or it may be *kaṭyālabhana*.⁴ The *kaṭivastra* touching the hip in the movable icon (*jaṅgama arcā*) is specially meant for mundane (*aiḥika*) results.⁵



Fig.14. *Kaṭi-hasta*

Ūru-hasta and *ūrupraṭiṣṭhita* seems to be same as the above but it slightly differs by placement of hand. According to *Nāradya saṁhitā*, the front part of the hand and fingers must be depicted as if in movement.⁶ It is observed, “In this, the hand is let down with ease along the side of body and the hand is made

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.81b:

kaṭiprasavyaṁ karayorantaraṁ dvyaṅgulaṁ bhavet //

² *Nāradya*.13.182b:

kuryādvāmatalaṁ mukhyaṁ kaṭisūtrādvadhau sthitam //

³ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.82a:

kaṭisprṣaṁ karaṁ kuryāt prasavyaṁ gadayā vinā //

⁴ *Nāradya*.13.183a:

athavā kaṭimālambya tāṁ viḥāya sthitaṁ tu vā //

⁵ *Nāradya*.13.184:

kiñcātra jaṅgamārcāyāṁ kaṭilagnakare sthitam //

viśeṣatassakāmānām aiḥikānāmapekṣayā //

⁶ *Nāradya*.13.183b:

sarvaṁ savibhramaṁ kāryaṁ karāgraṁ sāṅguliyakam //

to rest on the loin or thigh. However, in the seated icon, the hand is bent at elbow. The hand holds the attribute *gadā* (club) or it bears *alapadma-mudrā* in which the palm turned downwards remains very close to the thigh.”¹ Another *śilpa* text *Sakalādhikāra* asserts that the palm must be along the thigh in which the tip of the middle finger remains equal to the edge of *medhra*.²



Fig.15. Ūru-hasta

Añjali-mudrā signifies salutation and adoration. In this *saṃyuta* hand-pose the open hands are placed side-by-side and slightly hollowed with the hands are clasped together with the palms touching together. *Āñjali-mudrā* held close to the chest is called *hṛdaya-añjali* (Accn. No.503/65).

Pallava-mudrā resembles *ādāna-hasta* in which the palm and fingers are slightly bent and the palm faces upward. If the fingers are let loose, it appears to be *alapallava-mudrā*. In the icon of Olayakunnam (Accn. No.503/65) and of Palani (Accn. No. 94-5/48), this hand is used to hold the lotus.

4.1.2. Āsanās (Postures and stances)

The treatises of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* while detailing the icons of divinities mention a number of (postures) *āsanās* and stances such as *sukhāsana*, *padmāsana*, *svastikāsana*, *virāsana*, *utkaṭikāsana*, *prasārāsana* and *ekajānukrama* in seated postures; and the standing stances are *samapādasthānaka*, *ūrdhvajānu*, *svastika* and *sthitakuñcita* in three types of *bhaṅgas* viz. *ābhaṅga*, *samabhaṅga* and *atibhaṅga*. However, the present study here is confined to *sukhāsana*, *padmāsana* and *lalitāsana* in seated icons and *samapādasthānaka* and *sthitakuñcita* in standing icons.

* ¹ K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, pp.39-40.

² SKL.8.274.

Sukhāsana, signifying any comfortable seated position is common in the icons of high grade. In this the divinity is depicted in sitting posture on a pedestal (*pīṭha*) with one of the legs resting flat on the seat while another is let down.

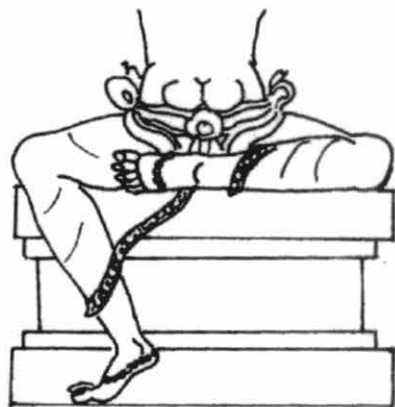


Fig.16. Sukhāsana

This pose may be taken as *rājalilāsana* or *lalitāsana* with one leg resting flat on the seat and another knee is raised upwards from it and the right arm, as *daṇḍa-hasta* or *gaja-hasta*, is stretched out and is placed on the raised knee.

Lalitāsana indicates very flexible and comfortable seated posture. In this *āsana* one leg rests on the seat and another knee is raised upwards and the foot is placed on the pedestal properly. This *āsana* is normally meant for the icons of Gajānana and *bhūtagaṇa* whose *tālamāna* is less than seven. The icon of Viṣṇu from Olayakunnam (Accn. No.503/65) is a rare specimen with *lalitāsana*.

Padmāsana is a sitting position in which the legs are crossed with the soles of the both feet turned upward and resting on the opposite thighs. Śrī in the form of *Yogalakṣmī* or *Śrīvatsa*, is described in this posture, according to the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*. This posture is applicable for Śrī installed in the *parivāra-*

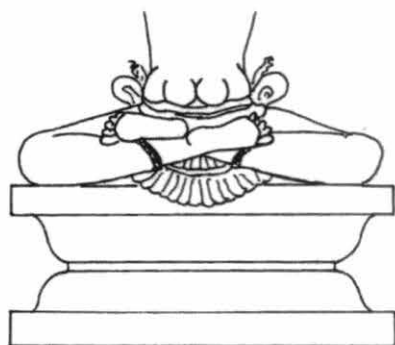


Fig.17. Padmāsana

ālaya in the Viṣṇu temples. This denotes deep meditation and concentration. This pose is prescribed for the icons of subordinate or accompanying divinities to be depicted in worshipping attitude (Accn. No.503/65). In *ardhapadmāsana* posture, the folded legs are placed one above the other.

Samapādasthānaka stance indicates calmness and majesty. The terms 'sama', 'pāda', and 'sthānaka' indicate the perfect straight pose in which the

brahma-sūtra (middle plumb-line) passes exactly in the middle of the icon in front and divides the body equally on vertical plan right from the head to leg with the placement of feet on the pedestal. The deviation of the parts of the body of the icon is calculated with reference to *brahma-sūtra*, also called *madhya-sūtra* and *purāsūtra*. If both the right and left halves remain equal the stance is called *samapāda-sthānaka* in which the icon is straight. This posture is meant for major divinities like Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva.

In *sthita-kuñcita* pose,¹ one foot is planted straightly and firmly on the pedestal and another foot is placed on the pedestal with a slight bend at the knee hence the name. The terms '*sthita*' and '*kuñcita*' meaning 'firm' and 'bent' clearly indicates one foot is planted straightly and firmly on the pedestal and another foot is placed on the pedestal with a slight bend at the knee.

With reference to the fluxions of the parts of the body, the *sthitakuñcita* postures are found three types viz., *ābhaṅga*, *samabhaṅga* and *atibhaṅga*. This is well observed, "This is known as '*bhaṅga*', based on the loss of height in the sense of lowering it on vertical plane, resulting from keeping the legs at three different distances in which also the head and other parts of the body are naturally deviated sideward from the *brahma-sūtra* (middle plumb-line). They are *ābhaṅga*, *samabhaṅga* and *atibhaṅga* in which the *natamāna* (loss of height vertically) is three, four and five *aṅgulas* respectively."² Except in case of Durgā (Mahiṣamardini), this *sthita-kuñcita* posture indicates a subordinate nature of the divinity in iconic forms. In *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*, the icons of Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī accompanying Viṣṇu on either side must be depicted in this stance with uniformity that the inner legs must be firm and outer leg must be bent or vice-versa (Accn. No.2).

¹ The term '*sthitakuñcita*' is not directly used in the *Vaikhānasa* treatises but the description is alone found.

² K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.34.

4.1.3. Āyudhas (Attributes)

Every icon of the divinities is differentiated from others with the help of four main features – *varṇa* (colour), *vastra* (garment), *vāhana* (vehicle) and *Āyudhas* (attributes). The *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra* traditions differ from the other in case of *āyudhas*. The *cakra* and *śaṅkha* are known as *sahaja āyudhas* of Viṣṇu according to *Vaikhānasa* concept. The *Vaikhānasa* treatises,¹ while classifying the *Āgamas* into two viz., the *Soumya* and *Āgneya*, prescribe that the four-armed icon of Viṣṇu should hold *cakra* and *śaṅkha* on the upper right and left hands respectively; the front right hand may be *abhaya* or *varada* and the left one must be *kaṭyavalambita* (*ūruhasta* or *kaṭihasta*); in case the lower left holds a *gadā* it is to be taken as *āgneya* or *tāntrika*. The *saumya* form (*Vaikhānasa*) is meant for the temples in villages and houses whereas the *āgneya* (*Pāñcarātra*) is meant for any place outside the village such as riverbank, hills, beach, and confluence of river and the hermit of the *sanyāsins*. This citation is an important information that the *cakra* and *śaṅkha* are admissible in the icon of Viṣṇu if and mode of worship is to be followed. The *Vaikhānasa* treatises, while describing the forms of Viṣṇu viz., Para, Vyūha and Vibhava do not mention *gadā* as an attribute. However, the *Kriyādhikāra* text mentions *gadā* as one in the *Virasthānaka* aspect of Viṣṇu. The *Pāñcarātra* treatises describe Viṣṇu with four attributes - *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *gadā* and *padma*. The *Brāhmiya citrakarmasāstra*, a *śilpa* text dealing only with the icons of Viṣṇu, mention the four attributes uniformly. The *Purāṇas* like *Agni* and *Vāyu*, the *Pāñcarātra* treatises and *śilpa-sāstra* works like *Rūpamaṇḍana* deal with thirty six forms of Viṣṇu with the alternative adjustments of four attributes and

¹ KRA.41.1b-6a:

viṣṇostantraṁ dvidhā proktaṁ saumyamāgneyamityapi //
saumyaṁ vaikhānasaṁ proktaṁāgneyaṁ pāñcarātrakam /
saumyāgneye tathā prokte śāstre vaidikatāntrike //
bhuktimuktipradaṁ saumyaṁ tāntrikaṁ bhuktimātradam /
saumyaṁ sarvatra sampūjyaṁ grāmādiṣu ca sarvaśaḥ //
saudeheṣu ca tathā rājñāṁ grheṣu ghamedhinām /
āgneyantu grāmabāhye naditire'tha parvate //
nage samudratireṣu nadisāgarasaṅgame /
āśrameṣu yatināṅca vivikṭeṣu sthaleṣu ca //
anuṣṭheyaṁ viśeṣeṇa mukthimātraphalārthibhiḥ /

colours. The *Pāncarātra* treatises are very particular about the icon with four attributes. *Pārameśvara saṁhitā*, a *Pāncarātra* treatise followed in Raṅganātha temple at Srirangam and some other adjacent temples, while dealing with the *nyāsa*,¹ informs that *padma*, *cakra*, *śaṅkha* and *gadā* are invoked beginning with lower right hand in clockwise mode in case the four armed Viṣṇu is worshipped. It is interesting to note that *Pārameśvara saṁhitā*,² while dealing with the divine marks on the body of the worshipper, mentions the four attributes should be marked on the shoulder of the devotee with hot metallic representation (*mudrādhāraṇa*)³. *Parama saṁhitā*,⁴ while describing different lands and islands, speaks, “In *Śvetadvīpa*, the bright four armed *Siddhas* are living. They are characterized in their hands with four attributes viz. *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *gadā* and *padma*. They worship and contemplate on *Puruṣottama* i.e. *Nārāyaṇa*.”

¹ *Pārameśvara*.15.403b- 404:

caturbhjasya devasya cakrādviviveśanam //
mukhyadakṣiṇahaste'bjam gadām vāmakare nyaset //
apare dakṣiṇe cakram śaṅkham vāmakare pare //

In worship, whatever the medium may be, the divine power is invoked with all the features both visible and invisible. The alphabets (*varṇa* or *mātrkā*) are invoked in different parts of the icon, which is known as *akṣaranyāsa*. Like this the *āyudhas* (attributes) and ornaments are also invoked. The medium may be *kumbha* (pitcher), *kuṇḍa* (fire alter), *maṇḍala* (diagram) or *bimba* (icon).

² *Pārameśvara*.15.959-963:

yeṣu vyakteṣu cihnāni nābhiviyaktāni sattama //
tānyapī svāni cihnāni lalāṭe vāmsapaṭṭake //
prṣṭhe vāpyaṅgapaṭṭe vā pāṇipādataleṣu vā //
mūrdhni vā dadhate tasmāt tatra tatra nirikṣayet //
tasmādalakṣaṇā vyaktirvidyate na kadācana //
evam tadyā viprāśca kṣatriyā vaiśyajāṭayāḥ //
maudgalyādyāstathānye ca na taccihnavivarjītāḥ //
bhaveyuh sarvathā tasmāccakraśaṅkhagadāmbujaiḥ //
lohairanālasantaptaistattanmantrādhivāsitaiḥ //
pūjitairarghyagandhāyairāṅkitavyāḥ kṣaṇena tu //

³ The *Pāncarātra* tradition speaks of *taptamudhrādhāraṇa* in which the metallic emblems of *śaṅkha* and *cakra* are heated and the symbols are placed on the upper part of the shoulders. By this, everyone becomes eligible to worship the Supreme Being for his personal reasons (*ātmārtha pūjā*). The *brāhmaṇas* having these symbols are eligible for temple worship (*parārtha pūjā*).

⁴ *Parama*.1.22b-23:

tatra tejomayāḥ siddhāḥ nivasanti caturbhujāḥ //
śaṅkhacakraḡadāpadmairāṅkitāḥ sveṣu pāṇiṣu //
puruṣottamamevaikaṁ dhyāyantaṣṭatparāyaṇāḥ //

Parama saṁhitā,¹ beautifully describes the form of Anantaśāyin as: Nārāyaṇa reclining on Ananta on the milky ocean has lotus like eyes; this four-armed one holds *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *padma* in his hands; Lakṣmī attends him near his feet; he has the *śyāmala* complexion and wears *pītāmbara*; he has Śrīvatsa and Kaustubha adorning his chest; and, he is attended by Vainateya (Garuḍa).

The above references are very important to safely conclude that the four attributes viz., *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *padma* are very essential in the *Pāñcarātra* mode of worship. As per *Vihagendra saṁhitā*,² the four attributes i.e., *padma*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *śaṅkha* signify the creation (*sṛṣṭi*), sustenance (*sthiti*), dissolution (*laya*) and eternal liberation (*mokṣa*) respectively.

The concept of thirty six or twenty four forms is not the part of *Vaikhānasa* treatises at all. However, the *Prakīrṇādhikāra* of Bhṛgu, as a unique case, describes the twenty four forms.

The icons under study can be classified into two viz., icons of two attributes and icons of four attributes. The *ūru-hasta*, *āhūyavarada* and *kaṭi-hasta* are common in both the *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra* treatises. The icons with the four attributes can be undoubtedly taken as the icons of *Pāñcarātra* temples. The icons with two attributes like *śaṅkha* and *cakra* may be from *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa* temples.

Currently, a visitor to the temple may have a question in mind to identify the temple whether it follows the *Vaikhānasa* or *Pāñcarātra* system just based on the icons present in the temple. In fact, many temples have been

¹ *Parama.1.56b-59a*:

atrāpaśyat paraṁ devaṁ kṣīrasāgaraśāyinaṁ //
anantabhogaśāyāyāṁ śayitaṁ pañkajekṣaṇam //
śaṅkhacakragadāpadmān dhārayantaṁ caturbhujam //
śrīyā caranayorjuṣṭaṁ śyāmalaṁ pītavāsasam //
śrīvatsaṅkaṁ prasannābhaṁ kaustubhojjvalavakṣasam //
sevitaṁ vainateyena sanniviṣṭena pārśvataḥ //

² *Vihagendra.2.25b-26a*: (cf. Smith, Daniel, op. cit., p.264)

padmaṁ cakraṁ gadā khaḍgaṁ cāpaṁ śaṅkheti ṣaṭ kramāt //
sṛṣṭiḥ sthitiḥ layo vṛddhiḥ vijayo mokṣa ityapi //

converted to one of the system irrespective of *Āgamic* injunctions. In some temples, *gadā* is forcibly removed to suit the need but the socket to insert the end of the *gadā* on the left palm can be noticed.

a. *Cakra* (Sudarśana)

Kāśyapa, while describing the nature of *āyudhas* and attendants of Viṣṇu states that *cakra* signifies the *saṁsāra* set in motion by Viṣṇu and Śrīdevī.¹ As per *Vihagendra saṁhitā*,² *cakra* signifies the sustenance (*sthiti*). Sudarśana occupies the significant place among *anapāyins* (inseparable ones) of Viṣṇu.³

As per the *Vaikhānasa* treatises,⁴ the personified form of *cakra* is male and he is the consort of Puṣṭi or Puṣṭikā. He has the complexion red or that of fire or sun and his garments are in red. He holds a *cakra* on his head.

Sātvata saṁhitā,⁵ while describing personified form of *cakra* states that Sudarśana is present inside the orb of his own rays with his short stature and red eyes. He always awaits the command of his Lord.

Sudarśana is depicted in two forms, *saṁūrta* (personified) or *sakala* and *amūrta* or *niṣkala*.⁶ According to *Prakīrṇādhikāra*, *cakra* is of three types, viz.,

¹ KJK.35, p.66:

tābhyāṁ yadvartitam saṁsārācākram

² *Vihagendra*.2.25b-26a (cf. Smith, Daniel, *op.cit.*, p.264)

padmaṁ cakraṁ gadā khadgaṁ cāpaṁ śaṅkheti śaṭ kramāt //
sṛṣṭiḥ sthitiḥ layo vṛddhiḥ vijayo mokṣa ityapi /

³ KRA.5.96-97a:

cakradhvajābjayūtheśā dvitīyāvaraṇādiṣu //
ete'napāyinaḥ proktā viṣvakṣenasamanvītāḥ /

⁴ KJK.49, p.85:

cakraṁ ravimaṇḍalābham

VAK.19, p.102:

cakraṁ puṁrūpam raktābham

VAK.20, p.118:

cakraṅgāraṇaḥ raktāmbaṛadharāḥ śīrasi cakrabhṛt puṣṭikeśo dhūmaketuḥ
pravṛttavāhanaḥ

⁵ *Sātvata*.13.9b-10a:

svaraśmimaṇḍalāntasthaṁ valgantaṁ hetipaṁ smaret //
vibhorājñāṁ pratikṣantaṁ hrasvāṅgaṁ raktalocanam //

⁶ VAS.31.1b-2a:

cakranta dvividhaṁ jñeyaṁ mūrtam cāmūrtameva ca //

Kālacakra, *Viracakra* and *Sahasravikaca*.¹ *Sahasravikaca* is a personified form. *Kālacakra*, known as *utsava-cakra*, is in the form of a *cakra* with the pedestal. The diameter of *Cakra* is equal to the height of the face of *dhruva-bera*. With pedestal, it measures twice the size of the face.² *Viracakra* is the one held in the right hand of Viṣṇu.

According to *Prakīrṇādhikāra*,³ the diameter of the *cakra* must be equal to the face of the icon, i.e., one *tāla* proportionately. It should have five *jvālās* (flames), four on the sides and one in the middle and with twelve or eight spokes. It should be placed on the tip of the finger on the right hand.

*Pādma saṁhitā*⁴ details the *cakra*: the middle circle (*cakra-piṇḍikā* – the centre-hold of spokes) must have two *āṅgulas* diameter. The spokes (*ara*) must have eight *āṅgulas* i.e. four *āṅgulas* on either side; outer rim (*nemi-valaya*) must be two *āṅgulas* wide i.e. one *āṅgula* on both sides. In total, the distance between the outer parts of the rim has 12 *āṅgulas* diameter. There are four *jvālās* on the rims. Two *jvālās* with tongues must be from the middle (*nābhi*). The flames must be 2½ *āṅgulas* high and three *āṅgulas* wide. The spokes (*ara*) may resemble *yava* grain or eye in shape. The spokes may be six, eight or twelve.

mūrtam sakalamityuktaṁ amūrtam niṣkalam smṛtam /
¹ PRA.23.14:

trividhaṁ cakramuddiṣṭaṁ brahmaṇā parameṣṭhinā /
kālacakraṁ viracakraṁ sahasravikacaṁ tathā /

² PRA.23.18b:

dhruvaberaṁ mukhāyāmaṁ dviguṇayāmaṁ viśṭṭam //

³ PRA.23.15a, 16:

karoroddhvaṁ viracakraṁ devasya mukhamānataḥ /
devasya mukhamānaṁ syāddvādaśāṣṭārācīṇitaṁ /
jvālāpañcakasaṁyuktaṁ karāgre dakṣiṇe caret //

⁴ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.85-88a:

cakraṁ sudarśanaṁ vṛttaṁ dvādaśāṅgulamānakam /
aṣṭāṅgulamarakṣetraṁ dvyaṅgulā cakrapīṇḍikā //
tadvat syānnemivalayaṁ caturjvālāsamanvitaṁ /
nābhāvubhayato jvālā trīśikhāvartasobhitā //
adhyardhadvyaṅguloṣedhā vistīrṇārdhāṅgulādhikā /
arāṇi yavatulyāni netrātulyāni vā punaḥ //
aṣṭau dvādaśa vā ṣaḍvā ṣaḍjvālāṁ śaṅkhamiṣyate /

*Pādma saṁhitā*¹ and *Nāradiya saṁhitā*² describe that *tarjanī* (index finger) and *madhyamā* (middle finger) combined together to hold *cakra*.³ As such, the tip of the flame of the *cakra* must be to the level of *keśānta* (hairline) or *netrasūtra* (eye-line).⁴

In the Viṣṇu icons under study in the Government Museum, Chennai, the *cakrāyudha* is found in three major types - 1. *Prayoga-cakra* (the rim faces the onlooker), 2. *Sthita* (normal or the complete *cakra* faces the onlooker), and, 3. semi-profile. In the icons under study we have different specimens of *cakra* with reference to flames, spokes, the position and the level with reference to the horizontal *sūtras* of iconography. In some icons, the upper *jvālā* of the *cakra* is to the level of *netrasūtra* (eye-line), in some to the level of chin (*cubuka*) and in some to the hiccup line (*hikkā-sūtra*).

b. *Śaṅkha* (Pāñcajanya)

*Īśvara saṁhitā*⁵ mentions the king of *śaṅkha*, i.e., *Pāñcajanya* is the treasure of learning. According to *Sātvata saṁhitā*,⁶ the personified form of *śaṅkha* has the complexion of snow mountain and he has lotus-like eyes; he always remains pronouncing the essence of the *Āgama* texts through his mouth. As per *Vihagendra saṁhitā*,⁷ *śaṅkha* signifies the eternal liberation (*mokṣa*).

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.84b:

tarjanimadhyamābhyāṁ tu dhārayantaṁ tathāmbujam //

The various reading 'dhāryam cakram' for 'dhārayantaṁ' is apt here.

² *Nāradiya*.13.179b:

tarjanimadhyamāmadhye kuryāccakram suśobhanam //

³ The position of fingers described here is obviously *kartarimukha-hasta*. However, the text does not mention 'kartarimukha.'

⁴ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.89b:

keśāntena samāṁ yadvā netrasūtreṇa tatsamam //

⁵ *Īśvara*.24.119a:

vidyākośastu vāmena saṅgrhitaśca śaṅkharāṭ //

⁶ *Sātvata*.13.12b-13a.

tuḥinācalasaṅkāśaṁ śaṅkhaṁ kamalalocanam //
sadāgamādisāraṁ taṁ udgīrantaṁ svakairmukhaiḥ //

⁷ *Vihagendra*.2.25b-26a (cf. Smith, Daniel, *op.cit.* p.264):

padmaṁ cakram gadā khadgaṁ cāpaṁ śaṅkheti śaṭ kramāt //
sṛṣṭiḥ sthitiḥ layo vṛddhiḥ vijayo mokṣa ityapi //

The *Vaikhānasa* treatises¹ mention *śaṅkha* in the form of *bhūta* in personified form and to be the consort of Vāruṇī. He is of milky white in hue and clad in red garments. He holds a *śaṅkha* on his head.

According to *Pādma saṁhitā*,² *śaṅkha* may have eight, twelve or six *jvālās* (flames) but the *jvālās* are many, as per *Nāradiya saṁhitā*.³ The height must be twelve *aṅgulas* and the width is eight *aṅgulas*. The spiral of the *śaṅkha* must be clockwise (*pradakṣiṇāvarta*). The dimensions of the *jvālā* of *śaṅkha* are same as that of *cakra*.

*Pādma saṁhitā*⁴ and *Nāradiya saṁhitā*,⁵ while describing the position of *śaṅkha* on the upper hand, informs that *śaṅkha* must be held on the pair *tarjanī* (index finger) and *madhyamā* (middle finger) combined together. As such, the tip of the flame of *śaṅkha* must be to the level of *keśānta* (hairline) or *netrasūtra* (eye-line).⁶

In the Viṣṇu icons under study in the Government Museum, Chennai, *śaṅkha* is found in two major types - 1. *dakṣiṇāvarta* (with clockwise-spiral), and, 2. *vāmāvarta* (with anticlockwise-spiral). The position of *śaṅkha* with

¹ KJK.49, p.85:

śaṅkhaṁ candrābham

VAK.19, p.102:

śaṅkhaṁ bhūtākāraṁ śvetābham

VAK.20, p.118:

pāñcajanya dugdhābho raktavastradhara bhūtākṛtiḥ śirasi śaṅkhabhṛt viyadgatidhvajo viyadgātrāyudho hamsavahanaḥ kaṇṭhaśabdaravaḥ vāruṇipatiḥ

² *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.88-89a:

*aṣṭau dvādaśa vā ṣaḍvā ṣaḍjvālam śaṅkhamiṣyate /
vistāro'ṣṭāṅgulastasya dvādaśāṅgulamāyatam //
pradakṣiṇāvartayutam jvālāgram śaṅkhacakrayoḥ /*

³ *Nāradiya*.13.180a:

śaṅkhaṁ tathāvidhe vāme jvālanekasamanvitam /

⁴ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.82b,84b:

*uddhredbāhusimāntamūrdhvahastau dhṛtāyusau //
tarjanimadhyamābhyām tu dhārayantaṁ tathāmbujam //*

'dhāryam cakram' is various reading for 'dhārayantaṁ.'

⁵ *Nāradiya*.13.179b-180a:

*tarjanimadhyamāmadhye kuryāccakraṁ suśobhanam //
śaṅkhaṁ tathāvidhe vāme jvālanekasamanvitam /*

⁶ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.89b:

keśāntena samam yadvā netrasūtreṇa tatsamam //

reference to iconometrical sūtras vary in many icons. In the icons under study, we have different specimens of *śaṅkha* with reference to flames.

c. *Gadā* (Kaumodakī)

Gadā, in personified form has the complexion of golden mountain; she is splendour and has lotus-like eyes; she illuminates the span of the sky with the rays emanating from her, thus describes *Sātvata saṃhitā*.¹ As per *Vihagendra saṃhitā*,² *gadā* signifies dissolution (*laya*).

Marīci³ describes *gadā* of Viṣṇu viz. Kaumodakī in female form. This two-armed one has golden or red complexion and red clothes. She holds *gadā* on her head.

Gadā must be on the left side where the palm is turned downside like *kaṭihasta*. *Pādma saṃhitā*⁴ describes: *gadā* must be of four *tāla* of the length. The broader portion should be at the bottom and the thin portion should be at the top and must be held in the upturned palm of the lower left hand. The broader portion has to be three *aṅgulas* and thinner portion is one *aṅgula* and *madhyama* should be two and half *aṅgulas*.

*Pādma saṃhitā*⁵ says, while holding *gadā*, the distance between the waist and palm must be two *aṅgulas*. *Nāradya saṃhitā*⁶ informs that the broader

¹ *Sātvata*.13.11b-12a:

gadāṃ hemādrisāṅkāśāṃ tanvīm kuvalayekṣaṇām //
svotthena raśmijālena bhāsayantīm nabhasṭhalam //

² *Vihagendra*.2.25b-26a. (cf. Smith, Daniel, *op.cit.*, p.264)
padmaṃ cakram gadā khaḍgaṃ cāpaṃ śaṅkheti śaṭ kramāt //
sṛṣṭiḥ sthitiḥ layo vṛddhiḥ vijayo mokṣa ityapi //

³ *VAK*.19, p.102:

gadāṃ raktābhāṃ strirūpām

⁴ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.80-81a:

catustālāyatām mūle sthūlāmagre kṛṣāmrjūm //
tryaṅgulaṃ mūla sahanamagre sahanamaṅgulaṃ //
dvyāṅgulaṃ sārddhamitarad gadāmadhyam caturmukha //

The various reading 'nahana' for 'sahana' is apt.

⁵ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.81b:

kaṭiprasavyam karayorantaram dvyaṅgulaṃ bhavet //

⁶ *Nāradya*.13.182a:

pīṭhāgrakoṭivīśrāntagadāmuṣṭyagrasaṃsthitam //

(bulbous) end of *gadā* must rest on the edge of the *pīṭha*, i.e. on the top of *karnikā* of the *padmapīṭha*, in the standing icons.

In the Viṣṇu icons under study in the Government Museum, Chennai, *gadā* is found in different types - 1. Resting on upper part (*karnikā*) of pedestal (Accn. Nos. 3, 4 and 625/68), 2. Resting on *adhodala* of *padmapīṭha* (Accn. Nos.2, 555/66) 3. Kept horizontally on the palm (Accn. Nos.5/01, 17, 459/61, 554/60), and, 4. Held in the palm turned downwards (Accn. No.97/48). In some icons, *gadā* is missing but the traces are found. Moreover, the *kaṭihasta* holding *gadā* is depicted in different manners with reference to iconometrical *sūtras*.

d. Padma

*Sātvata saṁhitā*¹ informs that the personified form of lotus has *avadhātā*² complexion like jasmine, and he has the gentle and smiling face; and he sings sweet sound pleasant to ear. As per *Vihagendra saṁhitā*,³ *padma* signifies the creation (*sr̥ṣṭi*).

*Pādma saṁhitā*⁴ states that, in *abhaya-mudrā*, a lotus with stem should be present between *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī*. *Nāradiya saṁhitā*⁵ states the same but the lotus should be facing upward. Obviously, this *saṁhitā* specifies both *abhaya* and lotus together to accommodate both the concepts, i.e., *abhaya-mudrā* for fearlessness and *padma* which is mandatory in *Pāñcarātra* concept. According to *Pāñcarātra* concept, *śaṅkha* and *cakra* are held in upper hands, *gadā* is held in the lower left hand and another important attribute *padma* is to be held in the lower right hand. This can be noticed in the icons of

¹ *Sātvata*.13.10b-11a:

kundāvadātāṁ kamalāṁ saumyaṁ īṣatsmitānanam //
ravaṁ ravantaṁ madhuraṁ śrotrendriyasukhāvaham //

² As per *Kāśyapa śilpāśāstra* (88.9a), *avadāta* is white resembling the star (*tāraka*).

³ *Vihagendra*.2.25b-26a (cf. Smith, Daniel, *op.cit.* p.264)

padmaṁ cakraṁ gadā khaḍgaṁ cāpaṁ śaṅkheti ṣaṭ kramāt //
sr̥ṣṭiḥ sthitiḥ layo vṛddhiḥ vijayo mokṣa ityapi //

⁴ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.78b.

aṅguṣṭhatarjanīmadhye sanālaṁ kamalāṁ bhavet //

⁵ *Naradiya*.13.180b-181a:

mukhye dakṣiṇahaste tu kamalam nālasaṁyutam //
aṅguṣṭhatarjanīmadhye kamalāṁ śubhamunmukham //

Government Museum, Chennai (Accn.Nos. 4, 7, 97/48 and 625/68). Moreover, *Pādma sarṁhitā*¹ uniquely prescribes that a lotus should be drawn on the palm of *varada-mudrā*.

Padma, along with other three attributes viz. *cakra*, *śaṅkha* and *gadā*, play an important role to define twentyfour forms of Viṣṇu beginning with Keśava.

Padma is depicted in different manners in the Viṣṇu icons under study in the Government Museum, Chennai: a) Lotus with stem is shown between *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī* (Accn.No.3.), b) Lotus is held in *kaṭaka-mudrā* (Accn. Nos.5/01, 459/61, 554/65 and 555/65), c) Lotus is held in *pallava-mudrā* (Accn.Nos.94-5/4and 503/65), d) Lotus is shown in *abhaya-mudrā* but it is held by *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī* (Accn.Nos.12 and 83/44).

4.1.4. Ābharaṇa (Ornaments)

The embellishments or accessories, known by the collective name of *ābharaṇa*, not only serve the purpose of adding aesthetic value to the icon, but also are indeed meant to express the status or degree of the particular deity in relation to the other forms. The ornaments highlight the essential nature, attitude and qualities embodied by the same. It is mentioned in the *Vāstusūtra Upaniṣad*,² “By ornamentation (*tadbhūṣaṇāt*) an attractive sight is obtained... By seeing these ornaments all people rejoice... From delight grows contemplation, from understanding the icon, the realization of Brahman, which is bliss, thus it is said in the Veda...” Bharata, the earliest to detail the ornaments, states that an improper dress will not enhance the beauty but becomes ridiculous like the girdle placed on the breast.³

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.20.79a:

varade kamalākāraṁ likhet karatalodare /

² *Vāstusūtra Upaniṣad*, p.102.

³ *Nāṭya-śāstra*.23.68b-69:

veṣaṁ tathā cābharaṇaṁ kṣurakarma paricchadam //
adeśayukto veṣo hi na śobhām janayiṣyati /
mekhalorasi baddhā tu hasyaṁ samupapādayet //

The numerous types of ornaments are mentioned and sometimes detailed in the Āgamic literature and in the treatises on art and iconography, *Purāṇas* (sections dealing with ornaments) and, in particular, the *Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata prescribe and define in detail including the auspicious signs and symbols (*cihna*), garlands (*mālā*), garments (*vastra*) and crowns (*makuṭa*) which are to bedeck the deities and their surrounding figures.

To study the ornaments of the icons of Viṣṇu in the Government Museum, Chennai, under study, one has to consult the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata, the earliest literary record. In this, Bhatara mentions four types of ornaments viz. *āvedhya*, *bandhaniya*, *kṣepya* and *āropya* based on the method of wearing them.¹ *Āvedhya* is piercing ornaments like *kuṇḍala* adorning the ears; *bandhaniya* is binding ones like girdle (*śroṇī-sūtra*), bracelet (*aṅgada*) worn on the upper arm and necklace of pearl (*muktā-bandhana*); *kṣepya* (wearing) is type of ornaments like anklet (*nūpura*) and hand-ornaments; *āropya* (putting on) is variety of ornaments like golden thread (*hema-sūtra*) and necklaces (*hāra*).² *Aparājitapṛcchā*, another text authored by Bhuvanadeva (c. 12th – 13th Century AD) mentions and details 16 types of ornaments.³

In the icons, where other iconographical details are completely lost due to the damaged or 'mutilated' condition of the ancient icons, the analytical study and definition of the ornamental features become, in fact, fundamental for the identification of the icon, its function/role, and hierarchical collocation.

As one can observe on the metal icons housed in the Government Museum, Chennai, the *ābharaṇa* appear to be similarly depicted and

¹ *Nāṭya-śāstra*.23.11:

*caturvidham tu vijñeyam nāṭye hyābharaṇam budhaiḥ/
āvedhyam bandhaniyam ca kṣepyamāropyameva ca //*

² *Ibid*.23.12-13:

*āvedhyam kuṇḍalādiha yat syāt śravaṇabhūṣaṇam /
śroṇīsūtrāṅgade muktā bandhaniyāni nirdiśet //
prakṣepyam nūpuram vidyād hastābharaṇameva ca /
āropyam hemaśūtrādi hārāśca vividhāśrayāḥ //*

³ *Aparājitapṛcchā*.236.2:

*bhūṣaṇāni tāta vakṣye āpādataḥkāmastakam /
śoḍaśābharaṇāniha kathitāni ca putraka //*

reproduced all over the Indian-territory, bespeaking of a common traditional practice. In general, it can be stated that the basic characteristics of the ornaments represented in plastic art forms tally with the descriptions and definitions of the textual sources though some minute differences are noticeable in the icons, with regard to the stylistic regional interpretations due to the influence of local customs and fashion. the names of the ornaments are easily traced since they mostly derive etymologically from the part of the body they are supposed to ornate, besides being additionally designated by the material and/or the shape they represent. Even the technical terms met in the canonical literature are similarly used with minor regional variations.

In the metal icons of Viṣṇu in the Government Museum, Chennai, one can find the following types of *ābharana*, which are defined and described in detail with their peculiarities starting with the ear-ornaments and progressing down to the feet.

a. *Karṇabhūṣaṇa* (ear-ornaments or earrings)

A number of ear-ornaments are found in Indian sculptures. Bharata mentions two sets one for male and another for female. The ear-ornaments for female are *karṇikā* (ear-ring), *karṇa-valaya* (bangle-shaped ear-ring), *patrakarṇikā* (leaf-shaped ear ring), *kuṇḍala* (stud), *karṇa-mudrā* (ear-ring) *karṇotkilaka* (ear-tops) *danta-patra* (ivory set with gems) and *karṇapūra* (ear-pendant).¹ The ear-ornaments for men are *kuṇḍala* (ear-ring), *mocaka* (ear-drop) and *kilā* (ear-stud for upper ear-lobe).²

Known also as *karṇakuṇḍala* or simply by the term *kuṇḍala*, the ear-ornaments are usually worn in two different manners: by inserting the earring through a hook into the pierced earlobe and by inserting it directly inside the

¹ *Nāṭya-sāstra*.23.24-25:

*karṇikā karṇavalayaṃ tathā syaṭ patrakarṇikā /
kuṇḍalaṃ karṇamudrā ca karṇotkilakameva ca //
nānāratnavicitrāṇi dantapatrāṇi caiva hi /
karṇayorbhūṣaṇaṃ hyetaṭ karṇapūrastathaiva ca //*

² *Ibid.* 23.15b

kuṇḍalaṃ mocakāṃ kilā karṇābharāṇamiṣyate //

enlarged earlobe. Banerjea points out, "The custom of perforating the earlobes and ears for the insertion of various types of ornaments is very old in India... in ancient and medieval times it was common to both men and women. The ceremony of *Karnavedha* (perforation of the ear) is one of the important *samskāras* in the life of a twice born, and the wearing of *kuṇḍalas* was once regarded as one of the privileges of a *brahmacārin* (student initiate) and of a *grhastha* (house-holder)... The physical peculiarity of long and distended ears and earlobes, which was the direct outcome of the wearing of heavy and broad ear-ornaments, came to be regarded as a sign of beauty and greatness (cf. *prthukarnatā* as one of the signs of greatness in men)."¹

Gopinath Rao² enumerates at least five different kinds of *kuṇḍalas*, namely, the *patra-kuṇḍala*, the *nakra-kuṇḍala*, which is the same as the *makara-kuṇḍala*, the *śaṅkha-patra-kuṇḍalas*, *ratna-kuṇḍala* and the *sarpa-kuṇḍalas*.³ However, our study deals with only two types viz. *makara-kuṇḍala* and *patra-kuṇḍala*.

Patra-kuṇḍalas are the 'scroll-like' ear-ornaments, having the ornamental design obtained either by rolling (a strip of) the palmyra or coconut leaves which is further inserted into the pierced earlobes, or by the similar rolling of very thin and light golden 'leaves'.⁴ The circular space/surface

¹ Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p.288-9.

² Rao, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, Part 1, p.24.

³ Banerjea (*op. cit.*, p.289) further observes: "Different kinds of ear-rings (*kundalas*) are shown on the ears of different types of divinities. Rao refers to five kinds of ornaments, viz. *patra-kundala*, *nakra-kundala*, *śaṅkha-patra-kundala*, *ratna-kundala* and *sarpa-kundala*. Their very names indicate that they were made of cones of cocoanut or Palmyra-leaves or even thin gold leaves, (metal, ivory or wooden piece) in the shape of the mythical *makara* (a crocodile like animal), cut sections of conch-shells, jewels, and (metal, ivory or wooden piece) fashioned like a cobra, respectively. Śiva and sometimes Ganapati are adorned with *sarpa-kundalas*, the *patra*- and *śaṅkha-patra-kundala* are usually shown on the ears of the goddesses like *Umā* and others, while *nakra-kundala* can with equal appropriateness be used to decorate the ears of the divinities of both sexes."

⁴ Rao, *op. cit.*, p.24-25: "Even today we may see on the Malabar Coast ladies with specially bored pendant earlobes, in which there shine large but light, golden discs. In the earlier stages of causing the dilatation of the lobes of the ear, cylindrical rolls of cotton cloth or flattened spirals of coconut-leaf or Palmyra-leaf are thrust in to produce the required internal pressure. In course of time, these spirals came to be made of a thin sheet of gold in imitation of the leaf. This form of golden ear-ornament is known, rightly indeed, by the name of *patra-kuṇḍala*."

appearing within the scrolls may have various dimensions and can be either plain or shaped with some pattern within it. The *patra-kunḍalas* are observed adorning the icons of Śrīdevi (Accn. No. 2 and 31) consorting Viṣṇu on the right side.

Makara-kunḍala is the type of earring having the shape of the mythical animal (*makara*) and it is indicative of high status. This is (generally) worn as a pendant. The tail of *makara* is inserted into the ear-lobes (*kārṇa-pāśa*) either from the front or from behind. This is known as *makara-netūṅkulāi* in the hymns of Ālvārs. *Makara-kunḍalas* are noticeable in all the icons of Viṣṇu under study. The term '*makara*' to mean 'crocodile' is taken literally and the ear-ornament of one of the Viṣṇu icons (Accn. No.503/65) remains in the form of crocodile.

b. Kaṇṭhābhūṣaṇa and Vakṣobhūṣaṇa (ornaments of neck and chest)

In this category are included many types of necklaces, colliers, torques (metal collars), strings and garlands of various forms and materials which are to be worn around or hanging from the neck.¹ Here, they are classified starting with the type most proximate to the neck, (in descending order).

¹ Rao (*Ibid.*, p. 23-26) limits himself to briefly introduce this category using the general term of *hāra*: "*Hāra* means neck-lace and is seen in many different patterns. In the earlier periods, it is somewhat short and forms a broad band made up of several pieces." He describes further in detail the *vaijayanti* as a necklace peculiar to Viṣṇu: "The *vaijayanti* is a necklace composed of a successive series of groups of gems, each group wherein has five gems in a particular order; it is described in the Vishnupurāṇa thus: "Viṣṇu's necklace called *vaijayanti* is five-formed as it consists of the five elements, and it is therefore called the elemental necklace." Here five-formed points to the five different kinds of gems, namely the pearl, ruby, emerald, blue-stone, and diamond." He continues quoting from Vishṇurahasya: "From the earth comes the blue gem, from water the pearl, from fire the *kaustubha*, from air the cat's eye and from ether the *Pushparāga*." According to Banerjea (*op. cit.*, p.290.): "Another term which is used to denote a broad necklace in Sanskrit literature is the *grāiveyaka* which almost invariably adorns the neck and breast of the Yakṣa and other figures in Central Indian art. In many cases these necklaces are adorned with jewel-pendants and the jewel *par excellence* adorning the breasts of Viṣṇu is the *kaustubha* (Viṣṇu is described by Varāhamira as *kaustubhamāṇibhūṣitoraska*). The long necklace or garland hanging down from the neck below the knees, known as *vaijayanti* (also sometimes loosely called *vanamālā*) is peculiar to Viṣṇu; according to the Viṣṇupurāṇa it is five-formed for it is made up of five different gems, viz., the emerald, pearl, blue stone (*nila*), ruby and diamond associated with five elements." Both the scholars refer to the same text

Kaṇṭhī or *kaṇṭhikā*: It is also known as *Upagrīva* literary meaning ‘near or above the neck.’ This kind of necklace is worn tightly around the neck or just at the bottom of the neck. It can be made of pearl beads, gems, etc., or by a simple thread (*sūtra*), with or without a pendant. In the icons of Viṣṇu under study, one may generally notice the *kaṇṭhī* made of gems and simple thread. A beautiful beaded *Kaṇṭhī* is noticeable in the icon of Viṣṇu (Accn. Nos. 20a and 549/66). *Kaṇṭhī* with the pendent of *makara*, generally known as *makara-kaṇṭhī* is seen in the icon of Viṣṇu (Accn. No. 554/66).

Graiveyaka: This term, derived from the word ‘*grīvā*’ meaning neck, indicates any kind of necklace having different shapes and dimensions, but generally it refers to a short and broad necklace with or without jewelled centre-piece or pendants, embedded with gems or other decorative patterns, which has to adorn the central part of the chest.

The following are the main types: a) with prominent pendent (Accn. No.1888/96), b) with a comparatively ‘moderate’ *purīma* or *patra-purīma* as centre-piece (Accn. No.1889/96), c) without centre-piece but consistently broad (Accn. No.459/61), and, d) with the lower edge finished with gems or bells right around (Accn. No.7).

Hāra is a general term used to designate either a garland (invariably used just like the term *mālā*) or a long necklace with single or multiple strings or laces. They may be of pearls (*muktā-hāra*) and of gems (*ratna-hāra*), worn around the neck and generally falling over the breast to the sternum. In the icons of Government Museum, Chennai, one can notice the *hāra* extended to the level of *kakṣa-sūtra*.

Almost in all the icons of Government Museum, Chennai, the *upagrīva*, *graiveyaka* and *hāra* are found depicted together as a constant set on both male (Viṣṇu) and female (Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī).

(*Viṣṇupurāṇa*) but give a different interpretation of the Vaijayanti. Rao describes it as a short necklace whereas Banerjea defines it as a long garland.

Kaustubha, also known as *kaustubha-maṇi*, it is a very special jewel characterized by the five gems (pearl, emerald, sapphire, ruby and diamond) probably representing the five gross elements or *Pañca-mahābhūtas* (earth, water, fire, air, ether). According to the myth of *Samudramanthana*, Kaustubha emerged during the churning of the milk ocean and was worn by Viṣṇu, becoming thereafter an essential symbol associated to his icons. In some icons, it is represented as an ornament with five gems, which is worn either as a pendant, hanging on a *grāiveyaka* (Accn. No.3), or as a special feature adorning the long *Vanamālā* of Viṣṇu (Accn. Nos.459/61 and 554/66).

Another important feature of Viṣṇu is *Śrīvatsa*, special decorative symbol worn on the chest of Viṣṇu, representing Śrī remaining in the name of Yogalakṣmī. According to *Prakīrṇādhikāra*,¹ she remains in the form of *Śrīvatsa* on the upper part of the right breast of Viṣṇu who, therefore, known as *Śrīvatsavakṣas* and *Śrīnivāsa*. This is the one of the feature differentiates Viṣṇu from the icons of other divinities particularly that of Viṣvaksena.

Vanamālā, a longer garland generally stretched upto the knees, is one of the important characteristics of Viṣṇu who, therefore, has a special epithet 'Vanamālin.'

c. *Hasta-bhūṣaṇās* (Hand ornaments)

Skandhamālā and *kakṣamālā* used to adorn the shoulder/shoulders which consist of chains or strings, often embedded with pearls or jewels and various decorative patterns like full blown flower. This can be noticed almost in all the Viṣṇu icons.

¹ PRA.17.56b-59a:

aṣṭadhā procyate lakṣmīḥ prathamā ivanapāyini //
viṣṇorvakṣasthale kār्या sarvāṅkāraśaṁyutā /
dakṣastanasyordhvabhāge vahnయాṣre divyaṁaṇḍale //
padmamadhye samāsinām padmadvayakarāṇcitām /
varadābhayahastām ca mandasmitamukhāmbujām //
evam rūpam prakurvita yogalakṣmītu sā smṛtā /

There are a number of ornaments for hands and arms. According to Bharata,¹ *aṅgada* (armlet) and *valaya* (bangles) are for upper part of arm; *kharjūraka* (a scorpion-shaped bracelet) and *ucchitika* (bracelet) are for the forehand; *kalāpī* (string of pearls), *kaṭaka* (chain with links), *śaṅkha* (bracelet of conches), *hastapatra* (bracelet with designs of creepers), *pūraka* (a flat bracelet) are the ornaments for hand fist and upper part of wrist; and rings are meant for fingers.

Keyūra is the ornament worn around the upper arm or above the elbow. These are depicted variously, in many forms and shapes, depending on the material they represent. In the most elaborate cases, the *bāhuvalaya* is represented as a large band, often embedded with gems, having the lower edge embellished with pearl strings, and the upper edge surmounted by a prominent decorative pattern (*purima*) like *makara-purima*, *patra-purima*, *puṣpa-purima*.

Kaṅkaṇa or *aṅgaḍa* are the names given invariably to the armlets (*bhujā-valaya*) and wristlets. *Aparājitapṛcchā* confirms this ornament to be worn on upper arm.² it is the ornament to be worn above *keyūra*,³ the ornament meant for the crook (*kūrpara*) of the hand. The term ‘*ūrdhvataḥ*’ in the phrase ‘*keyūrasyardhvataḥ*’ of Bharata, may be taken not as ‘above’ but ‘on’ or ‘on the upper level i.e. around.’ In the icons of Viṣṇu under study, *kaṅkaṇa* is noticeable below the *keyūra*, sometimes on one hand only.

The *Āgamas* and *śilpa*-works pay more attention to several types of bands or *bandhas* (*kūcabandha*, *stanabandha*, *kaṭibandha*, *udarabandha*), threads or *sūtras* (including the sacred cord *yajñasūtra*, *kaṭisūtra*, *urassūtra/plamba-sūtra* etc.), girdles, strings and belts which adorn the torso (like the *channavīra* cross-belt), the waist and hips (*mekhalā*, *ūrudāma*,

¹ *Nāṭya-śāstra*.23.33-34:

*aṅgadaṁ valayaṁ caiva bāhumūlavibhūṣaṇam /
kharjūrakam socchitikaṁ bāhunālivibhūṣaṇam //
kalāpī kaṭakam śaṅkho hastapatraṁ sapūrakam /
mudrāṅguliyakam caiva hyaṅgulinām vibhūṣaṇam //*

² *Aparājitapṛcchā*.236.77a: ‘*yojyam ca kaṅkaṇam bāhvoḥ*’

³ *Bharatakośa*, p.6: *Aṅgadam* = *keyūrasyardhvataḥ kūrparopari bhūṣaṇam*

kañcidāma etc.) down to the thighs. According to Bharata,¹ variety of garlands set with jewels and made with artistic perfection are the ornaments of chest and jewelled strings are embellishment for the breast.

Channavīra is a cross-chest belt, i.e. a belt or band crossing over the breast in the front and similarly at the back. It generally denotes valour and power. This is noticeable in the icons of Śrīdevī (Accn. No. 2 and 31) studied here.

Kūcabandha or *stanabandha* means 'band on the breasts.' The function of these particular bands, worn sometimes by the Goddesses and female icons, is to keep the breast firm especially in case of fighting icons. According to Rao:² "Hindus are forbidden by the rules of Dharma-śāstra from wearing stitched clothes. Hence arose probably the practice of women employing this kucha-bandha." this can be noticed in the icon of Śrīdevī (Accn. No.31 and 18) under study in the Government Museum, Chennai.

Udarabandha is a piece of cloth (*bandha*) or a band, either flat in surface or variously decorated, which is worn (as a belt) round the belly/ over the stomach area (*udara*). Rao³ defines it as follows: "At the junction of the thorax and the abdomen also is worn a broad belt of good workmanship; it is called *udara-bandha*."

Yajñasūtra, also known as *yajñopavīta*, is the sacred thread worn by Hindus of the higher classes (twice born), etymologically *yajña sūtra* is the thread of *yajña* meant for rituals. *Yajñopavīta* refers to the fashion of wearing it over the left shoulder across the body. This very special symbolic thread is represented in different ways according to the status of the icon and the different materials it may be composed of (chord, antelope skin etc.). Banerjea⁴

¹ *Nāṭya-śāstra*, 23.32:

*nānāśīlpākṛtāścaiva hārā vakṣovibhūṣaṇam /
mañijālāvanaddham ca bhavet stanavibhūṣaṇam //*

² Rao, *op. cit.*, p.23.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴ Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p.290-291.

observes: “The *yajñopavīta* or sacred thread which is invariably worn by the male members of the twice-born is found on the icons of the gods from the Gupta period onwards; in the earlier icons it is not usually to be found. In mediaeval sculptures, what appears to be the representation of a jewelled *yajñopavīta* sometimes accompanies that of the cotton one; all this, of course, is placed in the *upavīti* fashion, i.e., it encircles the torso from the top of the left shoulder and below the right arm. Sometimes the skin of an antelope (*kṛṣṇasāra*) is thrown over the body of such deities like Nara and Nārāyaṇa.” On the other hand, Gopināth Rao states: “In almost all the later representations of Hindu gods and goddesses we may see the *yajñopavīta* running across the chest from left to right.” this can be noticed in the icons of Viṣṇu in the form of single-threaded (simple ones made of chains), Triple-threaded (simple ones, elaborate (bejewelled) ones, and beaded thread or pearl strings) crossing over or tied to *udarabandha*.

The triple *yajñopavīta* consists of a middle thread which, as prescribed, is worn over the left shoulder falling down to the waist; when it is represented as a ‘triple thread’ the other two cords (joined to the main one in the middle by a knot) are known as *stanaśūtra* and *urassūtra*. As the terms indicate these additional threads cross the torso respectively below the breast (*stana*) on the right side and along the side of chest (*uras*) on the left.

Another term to be used exclusively for the *yajñasūtra* worn by Viṣṇu is *pralamba-sūtra*, explained in detail by K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan¹ as follows: “*Yajñasūtra* mentioned in the *Vaikhānasa* works is different from *pralamba-sūtra* or *pralamba-yajñopavīta*, unique feature of Viṣṇu. Especially, this differentiates the icons of Viṣṇu from that of Viṣvakṣena (Seneśa). *Kriyādhikāra* speaks of this speciality. When Viṣṇu had battle with Pralambāsura, one of the cords of his *yajñopavīta* (sacred chord) was cut and hung down below his waist. On the request of Pralambāsura, Viṣṇu agreed to

¹ K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.44.

wear the same *yajñopavīta*. Hence, his sacred chord is called *pralamba-brahmasūtra* or *pralamba-yajnasūtra*.

d. *Kaṭi-ābhūṣaṇa* (Ornaments of Waist)

There are some ornaments adorning the waist and hips of the icons known as *kaṭi-ābhūṣaṇa*. These additional accessories, besides being considered for their specific functional purposes like in case of the belts which are meant for holding the robes, are of extreme interest from an aesthetic point of view.

Bharata¹ mentions the ornaments for the loins (*śroṇī*) viz. *kāñcī* (girdle) with strings of pearls, *talaka* (waist band), *mekhalā* (waist belt), *raśanā* (girdle) and *kalāpa* (sash); as far as the number of strings are concerned, *kāñcī* with one string, *mekhalā* with eight strings, *raśanā* with sixteen strings and *kalāpa* with twenty-five strings. Loin ornaments of celestial damsels and royal ladies consist of thirty-two, forty-eight and hundred and eight strings of pearls.

Kaṭisūtra is a (simple or thin) thread worn around the waist. Sometimes it is beautified with pearls or gems. *Kaṭibandha* is a band or belt worn over the waist. It is supposed to hold the under-garment/robe, which is then tied or wrapped around it.

Mekhalā is a very elaborate waist girdle or belt. Often it is seen decorated with additional strings made of chains or pearl beads, which fall over the thighs and are (therefore) called *ūrudāman*. If the latter are furnished with bells at their edges then they are known by the term *kāñcīdāman* sometimes with the bells.

Muktādāma is the collection of knotted strings which appears in the centre portion of the *mekhalā*. It represents the knot of the supposed to be

¹ *Nāṭya-śāstra*.23.35-37:

*kāñcī mauktikajālākhyā talakam mekhalā tathā /
raśanā ca kalāpaśca bhavacchroṇivibhūṣaṇam //
ekayaṣṭirbhavet kāñcī mekhalā tvaṣṭayaṣṭikā /
raśanā ṣoḍaśa jñeyā kalāpaḥ pañcaviṃśatiḥ //
dvātriṃśacca catuṣṣaṣṭiḥ śatamaṣṭottaram tathā /
muktāhārā bhavantyete devapārthivayoṣitām //*

garment (mostly invisible), which appears (assembled) in the front, with the ends being pleated between the thighs, as a sort of continuation of the knot. The *muktādāman* may be embedded with gems or furnished with various types of *purima* (prominent centre-piece).

e. *Pada-bhūṣaṇa* (Ornaments of leg)

The ornaments for the legs and feet are common in Indian sculptures as well in day-to-day life. Bharata¹ mentions some of the ornaments viz. *nūpura* (anklet), *kiṅkiṇikā* (foot-trinket filled with pebbles for tinkling), *ghaṇṭikā* (band with small bells), *ratnajāla* (strings of jewels) and *saghoṣakaṭaka* (bracelet producing sound) for the upper part of the ankle (*gulpha*), *pādapatra* for shanks (*jaṅghā*) and rings (*aṅgulīyaka*) for the toes in addition to *talaka* (a flat band) meant for the great toe.

Pādaḥvalaya are the single or multiple circular anklets worn around the ankles. A synonym for this ornament is *nūpura*. These are represented variously as a single circle, or a set of circles, or a large band.

Pādasara are the ornaments decorating the top of the foot, below the ankles. These generally have the shape of a 'garland' or chain, which appears to swaying smoothly over the surface of the feet.

Bhujāṅga-valaya is the special type of circular ornament having the shape of a coiled snake, which can be worn on the arms, wrists as well as the ankles.² In some of the Viṣṇu icons (Accn. Nos. 3, 109/49 625/28 and 917/70), a

¹ *Ibid.* 23, 38-39:

*nūpuraḥ kiṅkiṇikā ca ghaṇṭikā ratnajālakam /
saghoṣakaṭakam caiva gulphopari vibhūṣaṇam //*
*jaṅghayoh pādapatraṁ syādaṅgulīṣvaṅgulīyakam /
aṅguṣṭhe talakam caiva pādayoṣca vibhūṣaṇam //*

² *Manasara*. 50.21. (cf. Ganapati Sthapati, *op. cit.*, p.141).

*bhujāṅga kaṭakopetaṁ pādanūpurasaṁyutam /
karṇavibhūṣaṇam kuryānmakarāṅgitakuṇḍalam /
athavā svarṇatāṭāṅkau śeṣaṁ tu pūrvavat bhavet /*

"The part above the ankle of all the gods should be ornamented with a serpent belt, the feet should be adorned with anklets. Crocodile shaped earrings should be placed on the ears along with two gold rings."

coiled/spiral ornament or an extension-like ornament can be noticed just below the border of the *pitāmbara* (*ambarānta*) but above the ankle only on the right leg. This aspect has not yet been thought of and most of the pioneers of Indian iconography have not so far mentioned about this.

4.1.5. Garments (*Vastra*)

As pointed out previously, the *brāhmanic* people are not supposed to wear any stitched clothes, their traditional garments consisting of ‘one-piece drapery’ of different kinds (made of hide, silk, cotton or tree-bark) and of different lengths.

According to the texts there are two types of clothing or robes, namely the *bandhas* and the *vastras*. Under the category of *bandha* (bands) are comprised all the small pieces/strips of cloth which are ‘covering’ (or embellishing) some part of the body, including the *udara-bandha*, *stana-bandha*, *kaṭi-bandha* described above. In addition there are some more *bandhas*, like the long scarf-like cloth (*uttariya*) gracefully worn as undergarment by the divinities.

Uttariya is another type of elegant cloth worn over the upper body. Banerjea¹ calls it *āṅgiyā* denoting royal aspect. In three icons of Viṣṇu under study, *uttariya* is shown as a thin and broad strip beneath *yajñopavīta* running across the chest from left to right (Accn. Nos. 459/61, 554/66, 5/01). In most of the icons, *uttariya* is shown on the waist with the sashes falling on the sides.

Vastra, also called *ambara*, is the typical robe which drapes the lower part of the body, of both female and male icons. This is wrapped around the waist girdles, and consist either in a long garment, reaching just above the ankles or in a shorter one having a broad and well-defined border (*ambarānta*), seen just above the knees.

¹ Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p.293

All the embellishments (*bhūṣaṇa*), crowns (*makuṭa*), garments (*vastra*) and other accessories like *śiraścakra*, *pīṭha*, *prabhāvalī* are explained in the relevant places alongwith the descriptions of the icons.

4.2. *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas on Metal Icons (Lohaja / Dhātuja)*

4.2.1. Metals and Icons

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*, while describing the grade of material of icons, give special grade to metal icons. The metal icons are called *dhātuja* or *lohaja*. The metal icons are graded as *uttamottama*. *Nāradya saṃhitā* informs that the metal icons are considered to be flawless¹ and no colouring is required for the metal icons.² The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* are very particular about the colouring of icons. Atri states that the icons made of stone, clay and wood must have colouring over the same for, colouring is equated with the skin of the icon;³ the *dhruva* icon without colouring causes destruction of all;⁴ and the Supreme One becomes angry if the *dhruva* or *kautuka* icon does not have the colouring.⁵ This must be one of the reasons as to why the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* prescribe the metal icons. The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* are very particular that the relief icon (*ardhacitra*) should not be made of metal, for such icon becomes *ābhicārika*.⁶

¹ *Nāradya*.13.96a:

lohajāḥ pratimāssarvāḥ nirdoṣāssamudāhṛtāḥ /

² *Nāradya*.13.95b:

tathā vai varṇasobhāṃ ca na kuryāḥlohaje dvija //

³ *SAA*.19.8b-9a:

śailasya mṛṇmayasyāpi dāravasya dhruvasya ca //

berasya varṇasaṃyoge tvaksthāne varṇamucyate /

⁴ *SAA*.19.18b:

varṇahīnaṃ dhruvaṃ beram yadi kuryādvinaśyati //

⁵ *SAA*.67.40:

dhruvaṃ tu kautukaṃ vāpi sthāpitaṃ tu śilāmayam /

varṇayuktaṃ punaḥ kuryāt taddhīne kopakṛddhariḥ //

⁶ *Nāradya*.13.95a:

ardhacitraṃ na lohena kartavyaṃ hitamicchatā /

SAA.19.64b:

ardhacitraṃ na kartavyaṃ lohabimbaṃ kadācana //

KRA.20.166a:

ardhacitraṃ na kurvīta lohajaṃ mṛṇmayaṃ tathā //

The *Āgamas* prescribe the metals and the results. The *Vaikhānasa* treatises detail as three metals i.e., gold, silver and copper are highly recommended for making icon of Viṣṇu.¹ However, the icon of copper mixed with gold is preferable.² The icon made of different metals brings different results.³ The icon made of gold⁴ (*haima*) yields all prosperity; the icon made of silver⁵ (*raupya*) results in obtaining kingdom. The icon of copper⁶ (*tāmra*) results in the promotion of progeny. The icon made of bell-metal (*kāmsya*) causes enmity (*vidveṣa*); the icon of brass (*ārakūṭa*) is meant for the rites of using syllables (*proccāraṇa*⁷); the icon of iron (*āyasa*) causes heavy loss; the icon made of lead (*sīsa*) is for disease-free health; and the icon of tin (*trapus*) reduces life span. The icon of Viṣṇu should not be made with mixed material, excepting the gold.⁸ According to Atri the icon made of iron, tin, brass, lead and bell metal results in *ābhicārika*.⁹

¹ YAJ.5.13a:

sauvarṇaṁ rājataṁ vātha tāmraṁ vātha svaśaktitah /

² SAA.19.65a:

svaṇamiśreṇa lohena yadi kuryāt taduttamam /

³ PRA.7.27-29:

*haimaṁ raupyaṁ tathā tāmraṁ kāmsyaṁ caivārakūṭakam /
āyasaṁ sīsaṁ caiva trapusaṁ ceti dhātujam //
haimantu śrīpradaṁ proktaṁ raupyaṁ rājyapradāyakam /
tāmraṁ putrasamṛddhyartham kāmsyaṁ vidveṣakāraṇam //
proccāraṇe cārakūṭamāyasaṁ kṣayakāraṇam //
sīsaṁ nīrogakāraṇam trapurāyurvinaśanam //*

⁴ *Brāhmiya-citrakarmaśāstra* (15.16b-17) mentions four types of gold (*cāmikara*) and their purpose - *Jātarūpa* (yellowish gold), *hāṭaka* (reddish gold), *suvarṇa* (whitish gold) and *kanaka* (dark gold), beneficial to the people of *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra* respectively.

⁵ As per *Brāhmiya-citrakarmaśāstra* (15.15b,17b), four types of silver viz. *rūpya* (whitish silver), *rajata* (yellowish silver), *tāmra* (reddish silver) and *śukla* (dark / black silver) are meant in order for the four classes i.e. *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra*.

⁶ Four types of copper are mentioned in *Brāhmiya-citrakarmaśāstra* (15.14-15a) viz. *śulba* (yellowish copper), *tāmra* (reddish copper), *audumbara* (whitish copper) and *śabara* (dark copper) which are beneficial for the *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra* correspondingly.

⁷ *Proccāraṇa* is one of the *ābhicārika* rites. The syllables or the *mantras* are spelled against the enemies.

⁸ SAA.19.65b:

anyonyamiśralohena devarūpaṁ na kārayet //

⁹ SAA.24.10:

*ayasā trapuṇā kāmsyaritikāsisakairbhudhaḥ /
na kuryāddevatārūpaṁ kuryācedābhicārikam //*

SAA.68.1:

*āyasairārakūṭaiśca trapulohaiśca miśritaiḥ /
kautukam ca kṛtaṁ cettadābhicārikamucyate //*

The *Pāncarātra Āgamas* hold the three metals i.e., gold, silver and copper are of high grade.¹ *Śrīpraśna saṁhitā* mentions three metals and informs the results as – gold for prosperity, silver for wisdom and copper for all auspiciousness (*saubhāgya*).² *Nāradya saṁhitā*³ prescribes four metals which includes also brass. Moreover, the text recommends the pure metal and advises to avoid the mixtures.⁴

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* prescribe different materials for different types of icons installed in the temple. The *dhruva* icons of Viṣṇu alone may be made of any material. For the large immovable (*acala*), copper can also be used though copper and wood can also be used the stone or processed earth (*mṛd*) is commended for the same⁵. Marīci⁶ and Bhṛgu⁷ state that the *dhruva* icons of Viṣṇu are made of processed earth (*mṛd*) with brick (*iṣṭakā*), wood (*dāru*), stone (*śilā*) and metal (*loha*) every succeeding one being superior to the one preceding in sequential order. According to Atri,⁸ wood is *adhama*, *mṛd-bera* is

As per *Brāhmiya-citrakarmaśāstra* (15.44-45a), the icon made of gold causes prosperity, victory, health and knowledge; the icon made of silver results in nourishment of body and promotion of all sorts of prosperity; and the icon made of copper is beneficial for all the creatures / living beings.

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.19.41b:

suvarṇaṁ rājataṁ tāmraṁ viśuddhaṁ lohamuttamam /

The various reading 'trividham' for 'viśuddham' is apt here.

² *Srīprasna*.11.8b-9a:

sampatpradaṁ svarṇabimbaṁ rājataṁ jñānadaṁ bhavet //

saubhāgyadāyakaṁ tāmrameva trividhamīritam /

Srīpraśna.14.31a:

suvarṇaṁ rājataṁ tāmraṁ viśuddhaṁ lohamuttamam /

³ *Nāradya*.13.93b-94a:

lohaṁ caturvidhaṁ proktaṁ tantresmin pratimāvidhau //

suvarṇaṁ rājataṁ tāmraṁ ārakūṭaṁ dvijottama //

⁴ *Nāradya*.13.94b:

śuddhaṁ bimbaṁ praśastaṁ syāt miśritaṁ tu vivarjayet //

⁵ *KJK*.40 p.72:

mahāmūrtiṁ āyusśrikirtimicchan śilayā, prajāpunyavṛddhimicchan tāmreṇa,

yogaiśvaryasukhārthi dāruṇā, suvarṇabhūmayādicchan mṛṇmayena kalpayet /

⁶ *VAK*.15 p.69:

atha dhruvaberaṁ tāmrajaṁ śailadāravaṁ vā vidhiyate / dāravān mṛṇmayam śreṣṭhaṁ

mṛṇmayāt śailamuttamam śailāttāmraṁ mukhyaṁ bhavati /

⁷ *YAJ*.11.16b-17a:

dhruveṣu dāravaṁ śreṣṭhaṁ dāravānmṛṇmayam tathā //

mṛṇmayācchailajaṁ śreṣṭhaṁ śailajāt tāmrajaṁ varam /

⁸ *SAA*.18.1b-2a:

uttamaṁ śailajaṁ beram tāmrajaṁ cottamottamam //

madhyama, stone is *uttama* and the copper is *uttamottama*. Moreover, Atri mentions the achievement of rulership by worshipping the copper icon¹ and the copper is suitable for the *kṣatriya*.²

The *dhruva* icon made of copper results in good progeny and promotion of *punya* (meritorious deed), states Kāśyapa.³ The *dhruvārcā* may be made of stone or metal.⁴ The *dhruva* icons may be made of gold, silver or copper.

The *kautuka-bera* may be made of wood, stone, copper, silver, gold or precious stones,⁵ each succeeding one being superior to the preceding one in that order. Atri and Marīci prescribe different materials for *kautuka-bera* and the results : the wooden icon yields progeny; the stone icon causes long life; copper icon helps to achieve all sorts of prosperity; silver icon enables to get fame; golden icon is meant for nourishment, prosperity, happiness and all good results in both here (*aihika*) and hereafter (*āmuṣmika*); and the *kautuka-bera*

madhyamaṁ mṛṇmayam jñeyamadhamam dāraṁ tathā /

¹ SAA.18.2b:

mokṣārthi śailajaṁ kuryādrājakāmi tu tāmrajaṁ //

² SAA. 18.18b:

tāmrajaṁ kṣatriyāṇām ca vaiśyāṇām mṛṇmayam tathā //

³ KJK.40 p.72:

*mahāmūrtim āyusśrikīrtimicchan śilayā, prajāpūṇyavṛddhimicchan tāmreṇa,
yogaiśvaryaśukhārthi dāruṇā, suvaṇabhūmyādicchan mṛṇmayena kalpayet /*

⁴ KRA.5.79b-80:

*ekaberapraṭiṣṭhā cedvarṇahinaṁ śilāmayam //
lauhaṁ vā brahmabhāge tu sthāpayitvā samarcayet //
ekaberavidhānena lohabere praṭiṣṭhite //*

⁵ SAA.24.4b-8:

*dāruḥ śilā ca tāmraṁ ca rajataṁ rukmamityapi //
uktāni kautukādīnāṁ dravyāṇīmāni pañca ca //
dāravācchailajaṁ śreṣṭhaṁ śailajāttāmrajaṁ varam //
tāmrajādrājataṁ śreṣṭhaṁ rājatādrukmajaṁ varam //
dāravācchailajāryāḥ phalaṁ śataguṇam bhavet //
śailajāttāmraje bimbe sahasramadhikaṁ phalam //
tāmrajādrājate bimbe tvayutaṁ phalamucyate //
rājatādrukmajārcāyāmanantaṁ kathyate phalam //
rukṁābho rukmagarbhaśca devo rukmamayo hariḥ //*

SAA.76.51:

*dārave śailaje tāmre rājate raukmaje'thavā //
ratnenaiva kṛte pūrvam vidhinā sthāpīte'rcite //*

VAK.22 p.148:

*dāravācchataguṇam śailam, śailāttāmraṁ sahasraguṇam, tāmrajādrājatamayutaguṇam,
rājatāddhemamarbudaguṇam, rukmajaṁ sarvasādhanaṁ, ratnajamanantaphalaṁ
bhavati /*

made of precious stones (*ratna*) brings peace to all the worlds and enables one to reach spontaneously *Sāyujya-loka* of Viṣṇu.¹

All the icons may be made of metal especially of gold, silver and copper; the *kautuka* icon made of gold causes nourishment, prosperity and happiness; the silver icon enables to get fame; and the copper icon gives all sorts of prosperity.² The *bali-bera*, equal in size to that of the height of face of the *dhruva-bera*³ i.e. one *tāla* proportionate to the latter, should not be made of stone and wood⁴ and it must be of metal as *cala-bera* (Movable icon). *Snāna-bera*, known also as *tīrtha-bera*, is the icon meant for the daily bathing ceremony (*abhiṣeka*), must be made of metal. The *utsava bera* meant for processional purposes must be made of metal alone and it should not be made of stone or wood.⁵

As far as the forms of *avatāras* are concerned, the *Vaikhānasa* treatises do not permit that the metal icons of Trivikrama with lifted leg but as four-armed *kautuka-bera* of Viṣṇu alone.⁶ As per *Kriyādhikāra*, the *kaukuta* icons of

¹ VAK.22 p.148:

*putrārthi dāraṇaṁ, āyuh kāmah śailam, samṛddhikāmastāmraṁ, śrīkāmo rājataṁ,
aihiakāmuṣmikakāmāssauvarṇaṁ, sadyassāyujyakāmo ratnajaṁ kārayet /*

As per *Brāhmiya-citrakarmasāstra* (15.33-35a), the *kautuka* icon made of wood is of inferior (*adhama*) grade; the *kautuka-bera* made of stone, copper, silver, gold, gem and ruby (*māṇikya*) is superior in ascending order; of all, the *kautuka* icon made of ruby (*māṇikya*) results in both enjoyment (*bhukti*) and salvation (*mukti*).

² SAA.25.23:

*sauvarṇā pauṣṭiki proktā sarvalokasukhapradā /
kīrtidā rājatā jñeyā tāmrajā ca samṛddhidā //*

³ KRA.6.18b:

dhruvabera mukhotsedhaṁ baliberaṁ prakalpayet //

⁴ VAK.22 p.149:

śilayā dāruṇā cotsavaṁ baliberaṁ ca na kārayet /

⁵ SAA.24.19b:

śilayā dāruṇā bimbamautsavaṁ na vidhiyate //

VAK.22 p.149:

śilayā dāruṇā cotsavaṁ baliberaṁ ca na kārayet /

⁶ KJK.82 p.158:

trivikramasya kautukaṁ bimbaṁ viṣṇumeva kārayet /

VAK.57 p.375:

trivikramasya kautukaṁ caturbhujameva kārayet /

K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, op. cit., p.240 "... we come across a rare metal icon of Trivikrama (Plate XXXVII-c) of Pallava period (c.8th century AD) found at *Singanallur* (Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu)⁶. The icon, measuring 43 cms, is eight-armed and has typical

Sāyudha Rama and Nirāyudha Rāma should be made in the form of *dhruva-bera*.¹ *Khilādhikāra* prescribes that both the *dhruva* and *kautuka* icons of Kṛṣṇa are identical in features and may be made of gold, silver, copper or wood. The icon of Sāyudha Kṛṣṇa made of gold, silver or copper, must resemble the features of *dhruva*² which is considered to be *uttama* grade.³

4.2.2. Metal combinations and prohibitions

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* have certain prohibition rules regarding the mixture of metals in creating metal icons. The treatises are very particular that the relief icon (*ardhacitra*) should not be made of metal, for such icon becomes *ābhicārika*.⁴ The *dhruva* icons should not be made with the mixture of iron, brass and lead⁵ for, it becomes *ābhicārika*. The *kautuka* icon may be made of the metal mixed with gold but not with iron (*āyasa*), brass (*ārakūṭa*) and lead (*trapus*) as it becomes *ābhicārika*.⁶ Atri observes that the icon made of iron, tin,

antariya mode of dress. The left leg is raised up and the right leg is planted on the pedestal. This is under worship in the temple (Plate XXXVII-c)".

¹ KRA.11.100:

*kārayet kautukaṁ tadvadāsinam sthitameva vā /
sāyudhe sāyudham tadvat kautukaṁ ca samācāret //*

SAA.60.26:

*sthitam ca kautukaṁ kuryādāsinam vāpi kārayet /
sāyudhe sāyudham tadvat kautukaṁ ca samācāret //*

² SAA.60.68b:

dhruvaberānūrūpeṇa kautukaṁ ca samācāret //

³ KLA.19.181:

*sauvarṇam rājatam vāpi tāmrajam vāpi kārayet /
dhruvakautukayossarvasārūpyaṁcottamam bhavet //*

⁴ Nārādīya.13.95a:

ardhacitraṁ na lohena kartavyam hitamicchatā /

KRA.20.166:

*ardhacitraṁ na kurvīta mṛṇmayam lohajam tathā /
sthāpitaṁ ca visrjyānyat beram saṅgrhya yatnataḥ //*

SAA.19.64b:

ardhacitraṁ na kartavyam lohabimban kadācana //

SAA.67.26b:

ardhacitraṁ na kurvīta lohajam mṛṇmayam tathā //

⁵ SAA.24.10:

*ayasā trapuṇā kāmśyaritikāsisakairbhudhaḥ /
na kuryāddevatārūpaṁ kuryācedābhicārikam //*

⁶ KJK.99 p.189:

jātarūpaṁ vinā anyalohamiśritam bimban na sthāpayet /

SAA.68.1, 13:

āyasairārakūṭaiśca trapulohaiśca miśritaiḥ /

brass, lead and bell metal results in *ābhicārika*.¹ Relief icon (*ardhacitra*) should not be made of metal, for such icon becomes *ābhicārika*. The *śnanapa-bera*, worn-out and with holes and hollow yields the result of *ābhicārika*² hence, utmost care must be taken while creating the same.

4.2.3. Special Renovation Rules for Metal Icons

Kriyādhikāra states that all the four viz. temple (*ālaya*), tower (*gopura*), icon (*pratimā*) and pedestal (*pīṭha*) are the physical representation (body) of God³. Any problem in any of them is considered to be a flaw (*doṣa*) and this necessitates the *jirṇa-uddhāraṇa* (renovation). The *Vaiṣṇava āgamas* inform that the worship of the weathered icons may create some problems in the society.⁴ Generally the weathered icon should be abandoned after due rituals.

The weathered *mṛd-bera* and stone icon should be covered with the ropes made of hairs of cow's tail, *kuśa* grass, wool and cotton, and should be taken to sea or any deep reservoir and it is thrown in the deep area of the water sources.⁵ The deteriorated wooden icons must be burnt and mixed in the water of sea, river, etc., thus insists the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*.¹

kautukam ca kṛtaṁ cettadābhicārikamucyate //
suvarṇādanyalohena miśralohena kautukam //
kṛtvā tatsthāpitaṁ cettu mahādoṣo bhaviṣyati //

¹ SAA.24.10, 68.1.

As per *Brāhmiya-citrakarmaśāstra* (15.44-45a), the icon made of gold causes prosperity, victory, health and knowledge; the icon made of silver results in nourishment of body and promotion of all sorts of prosperity; and the icon made of copper is beneficial for all the creatures / living beings.

² SAA.68.21:

jarjharairapi saṁyukte'pyantassuśirasamūyute //
evaṁ doṣasamāyukte kautuke śnapane'pi vā //

³ KRA.20.140:

ālayaṁ gopuraṁcaiva pratimā pīṭhameva ca //
śarīrameva devasya smṛtametaccatuṣṭayam //

⁴ KLA.39.1b-2a:

jirṇāberamanarcyam syāt tasmāttam parivarjayet //
jirṇāberārcane doṣo rājarāṣṭrabhayāvahaḥ //

⁵ KJK.107, p.198-199:

govālarajjubhiḥ kṛśarajjubhiḥ ūrṇābhiḥ tāntavaiḥ sūtraiḥ vāsobhiḥ beramācchadya ...
samudraṁ samudragāṁ nadīm hradam va aśoṣyajālāśayamanyam vā āśritya ...
nāvamāropya ... agādhe kṣiptvā vaiṣṇavam hutvā ācāryebhyo dhenucatuṣkaṁ dadyāt //

VAK.73 p.452:

As far as the *jirṇa-uddhāraṇa* (renovation) metal icons are concerned, the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* lay special rules because the authors of the *Āgamas* obviously knew the value and re-usable condition of metals. They also provide information on the causes of the damage/deterioration. The common factors are:

1. The metal icon happens to fall from *abhiṣeka-vedī* (*snāna-pīṭha*), the palanquin or any other *yāna* (vehicle) at the time of procession on the street (*vīṭhī-bhramaṇa*).² In such, the essential components of the metal icon i.e. *prabhā*, *pīṭha*, *astra* and *vastra* are damaged/broken/bent.³
2. Climatic conditions during the windy season and rain combined with thunder and lightning.⁴

jirṇam sarvaṁ saṁśodhya navavastrairācchadya darbharajjubhirbadhvā ...
samudragām nadīm anyamaśoṣyajalāśayaṁ vā gatvā... tajjale prakṣipyā tattirthe
snānaṁ kuryāt /

¹ VAK.73 p.452:

dāravaṁ cedevameva kṛtvā vahnau dāhayitvā tadbhasma jale prakṣipet /

² KLA.37.21b:

pramādātpatite bimbe bhūmau saṁsnāpya vāriṇā //

Pāramesvara.19.110:

bimbe'bhīṣicyamāne tu patite snānaviṣṭarāt /

calite vā viśeṣeṇa pratiṣṭhāsthāpanaṁ caret //

Pāramesvara.19.112a:

prabhāpīṭhāstravastrāṅgabhedabhaṅgādīdūṣite /

Pāramesvara.19.236b-237a:

atra bimbasya patane bhede cchede yathāpuram //

saṁadhānādikaṁ kṛtvā sthāpya śāntiṁ samācaret /

Pāramesvara.19.450:

bhramaṇe ca tathā pīṭhādaṅgabhaṅgādike sati /

śāṭhīlye saraghādīnāmudbhava bahudhā grhe //

KRA.26.119a:

bhūmau nipatite bimbe śighramuddhṛtya tatpunah /

KRA.26.124-125:

yānānnipatite bimbe pīṭhe bimbādviyojite /

bhinnaṁ pīṭhaṁ prabhāṁ chatramāyudhābharaṇādikaṁ //

ālakṣya tadbimbagaṭāṁ śaktiṁ kumbhe niveśya ca /

bhinnān cyutāmīśa saṁyojya bimbaśuddhiṁ samācaret //

³ KLA.39.13b:

pramādātpatanādau ca viśeṣe cakrapīṭhayoḥ //

VAK.68 p.424:

yānātpatite hināṅge ...

⁴ VAK.68 p.425:

varṣadhārātivātāśanipātavidyullekhāyute kale deveśasya utsavaṁ na kuryāt /

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* mention two types of damages to the metal icon – a) the *pīṭha* shakes (*pīṭha-calana*) or it comes apart from the icon (*pīṭha-viyoga*) and b) any part of the icon gets broken or mutilated (*aṅga-vaikalya*).

In case of *pīṭha-viyoga*, the *pīṭha* is fixed with a process called *jaṭibandhana*.¹ In such case, after performing the *bālālaya* rituals, the precious stones are to be deposited inside the socket of the *pīṭha* and the icon should be fixed.²

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* insist, in case of metal icon, on the renovation of metal icons by classifying different parts of the icons as *mahāṅga*, *pratyaṅga* and *upāṅga*. If the *pratyaṅgas* and *upāṅgas* are corroded/damaged, *kirīṭa*, ornaments, *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *śiraścakra* are broken or corroded/damaged, these parts can be joined.³ Bhṛgu in *Kriyādhikāra* refers to some other authorities who recommend the *aṅgas* of the copper icon can be joined if damaged.⁴ However, in *Khilādhikāra*, he advises to dispose the weathered icon.⁵ In

¹ K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, op. cit., p.103.

“The metal icon is made in two parts a) the *pīṭha* and b) the body of the icon from *kirīṭa* to the metal plate (*phalakā*) below the feet. These two different parts are cast separately by the process called *madhūcchiṣṭa-kriyā*. The lower most part of the main icon (*phalakā* attached to the feet of the icon) inserted into the socket (on top) of the pedestal after depositing the precious gems (*ratna*) into it. The rim of the pedestal is hammered and folded inside which grips strongly the *phalakā* of the main icon and the pedestal is adjusted so as to appear one piece.”

² KLA.37.23b:

pīṭhādvijoyite bimbe yojayitvā yathā purā //

Parameśvara.19.492a:

pīṭhabhaṅge tathānyasmin kalpīte yojayeddhṛḍham //

³ KLA.37.25b-26a:

bhīṇe tu yadi pratyaṅge pramādāt sadya eva tu //

sandhāya tulyalohena sthāpanam pūrvavaccaret //

KLA.39.14b:

rekhāsuśiraṇiṣpattau punassandhānamācaret //

KRA.26.124b, 125b:

bhinnam pīṭham prabhām chatramāyudhābharaṇādikam //

bhinnān cyutāmśca samyojya bimbaśuddhiṁ samācaret //

KRA.23.88b-89:

pratyaṅge tu tathā hīne na tyajediti śāsanam //

kirīṭe bhūṣaṇe vastre nakhe vā romakeśayoḥ //

cakre śaṅkhe śiraścakre hīne sandhānamācaret //

⁴ KRA.23.90b:

tāmrajaśyāṅgasandhānam kecdāhurmaniṣiṇaḥ //

⁵ KLA.37.26b:

damage of *mahāṅga*, repair is not permitted. In such case, the icon should be melted and a new one should be made.¹ In case cracks and holes are noticed, they should be repaired.² The nose, ears and fingers of the copper icon can be repaired.³ In case of damage of the parts of the icons made of gold and silver, the icon should not be discarded and it must be repaired with the same material.⁴ However, the metal icons without proportionate limbs or with defective limbs must be considered as just metal and the icon must be made again.⁵

The icons made of gold and silver should not be discarded in spite of the damage of *mahāṅga*.⁶ In any case, the *Āgamas* insist to retain the metal icons by any possible way by attaching/joining the broken parts of the icon. The final resort is to *ālipyā* throw into the sea or deep water in the absence of any other alternative.⁷ On the other hand, the icon may be buried in the ground.¹

aṅgabhe tu sampanne pratimāṃ vidhinā tyajet //

¹ KLA.39.15-16:

*vicchinneṣu mahāṅgeṣu sandhānāṃ naiva ceṣyate /
parityajya vidhānena lohavattat vicintayet //*
*madhūcchiṣṭavidhānena tulyaṃ bimbaṃ prakalpya ca /
lohavat drāvayitvā tu nūtanāṃ bimbamācāret //*

² KRA.23.93a:

rekhāsuśirayukte ca sandhānāṃ kāraveddhṛḍham /

³ KRA.23.95:

*bimbasya tāmrajaṣyāpi karṇanāsāṅguliṣu ca /
hineṣvaṅgeṣu sandhānāṃ kuryādeva na saṃśayaḥ //*

⁴ KRA.23.91:

*sauvarṇaṃ rājataṃ bimbamaṅgahinaṃ bhavedyadi /
na tyajettulyalohena sandhāya sthāpayet kramāt //*

⁵ KJK.57, p.100:

tatrāṅgahinādidoṣeṣu punarlohavatācāret /

KRA.23.97b-98:

*vṛddhaṃ pramāṇahinaṃ jirṇaṃ raukamaṇa rājataṃ //
lohavattatsamāhṛtya śāntihomāvasānake /
madhūcchiṣṭavidhānena navikaraṇamācāret //*

⁶ KLA.39.20b-21a:

*sauvarṇaṃ rājataṃ lohabimbaṃ jirṇaṃ tyajenna hi //
tadeva drāvya kurvīta madhūcchiṣṭavidhānataḥ /*

Pārameśvara.19.465:

*sauvarṇarajatotthaṃ yat mahāṅgeṣu ca sakṣatam /
na tyājyaṃ tat samādheyaṃ tatsthāṃ śaktiṃ visṛjya ca //*

⁷ *Pārameśvara.19.464:*

*yadravyeṇāditaḥ kṛptaṃ tadravyeṇātha sandhayet /
tyaktaṃ bimbaṃ samudrāntaḥ prakṣipeccchāstravartmanā //*

Some special rules are prescribed in the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* regarding the *jirṇa-uddhāraṇa* of the metal icons installed in the places generally known as *svayam-vyakta* (self-emanated), *divya* (installed by divinities), *saidhha* (installed by *siddhas*) and *ārṣa* (installed by *ṛṣis*).² In the renovation process, the permission to correct the characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) of the icon is not admissible in these aforesaid places. The measurements and characteristics less or more, the same material is to be retained as it were.³ In spite of the inferior quality of the metal of the icon, upgrading/creating the icon with superior metal is not permitted, thus the rule is laid. However, one can find also another alternative that the icon may be replaced with one superior metal but not the inferior one.⁴ This must be one of the reasons that a number of worn out/weathered metal icons are still in worship in the temples at Srirangam, Kanchipuram, etc.

4.2.4. *Madhūcchiṣṭa-kriyāvidhi* (wax-modeling and metal casting)

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* insist that the metal icons should be made through a casting process called *madhūcchiṣṭa-kriyā*. Re-iteration of this

Pārameśvara.19.939:

*parityaktam tu tadbimban dhātudravyodbhavan vinā/
jalāśaye hyagādhe vā samudre vidhinā kṣipet //*

¹ *Pārameśvara*.19.940a:

bhūmau vā nikhanet vipra deśakālānurūpataḥ /

² *Pārameśvara* 15.925b-930:

*viśeṣeṇa svayamvyakte divye saiddhe'pi cārṣake //
sthāne tu karmabimbānām vyatyayan na samācaret /
tāni bimbāni viprendra yādṛśāni bhavanti hi //
lakṣaṇaiśca pramāṇaiśca yuktāni rahitāni vā /
utkṛṣṭalohajātāni apakṛṣṭotthitāni vā //
tādṛśāni bhavantyeva na kuryādanyathā budhaḥ /
na lakṣaṇāntaram kuryānna pramāṇāntaram tathā //
na tu dravyāntaram caiva na tu kuryāt kriyāntaram /
mantrāntaram na yuñjita sarvaṁ kuryādyathāpuram //
kuryāccellakṣaṇādīnām viparyāsaṁ mahāmate /
rājño rāṣṭrasya nāśaḥ syāt tatrāpi sahasantateḥ //*

³ *KLA*.39.18b-19a:

*yaddravyam jirṇaberasya taddravyeṇaiva nūtanam //
kārayet tatpramāṇaiśca sarvathā nānyathā caret /*

⁴ *KLA*.39.19b-20a:

*ādhyastu yajamānaścecchreṣṭhalohena cācaret //
kadāpi hinadravyeṇa jīrnoddhāre na kārayet /*

process in every place in the *Āgamic* texts dealing with metal icons shows that there are other possible processes for metal casting. Prohibition of relief metal icons (*ardha-citra*) is an important aspect in the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*.¹ Probably the casting of relief icons is by the moulding way (plate moulding). Hollow icons (*antaḥ-suṣira*) are generally created by attaching two relief icons of one-side moulding. This is also prohibited in the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*.²

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*, both *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa*, provide sufficient information on *madhūcchiṣṭa-kriyā*. *Samūrtārcanādhikaraṇa* of Atri and *Vimānārcanākālpa* of Marīci exclusively devote a considerable section in this regard. The installation of the metal icon (*kautuka*) created with prescribed *lakṣaṇas* (characteristics) nullifies the flaws (*doṣa*) in the main icon (*dhruva*), thus asserts Atri.³

The *Āgamas* divide the process of *madhūcchiṣṭa-kriyā* into three steps – a) Creation of icon using bee wax (*madhūcchiṣṭa*), b) Creation of *garbha* (core or mould in full), c) casting of metal icon and finishing work. The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* are very specific that the main icon (*mūrti*), the pedestal (*pīṭha*) and *prabhā* must be cast together with identical material.⁴

The first step of *madhūcchiṣṭa-kriyā* is creation of icon using of bee wax. The term *madhūcchiṣṭa* (*madhu* + *ucchiṣṭa*) means bee wax. Even in modern casting technique bee wax is used by the sculptors but not the paraffin. The model icon of bee wax should be created in full (like *citra*) with proper

¹ *Nārādīya*.13.95a:

ardhacitraṃ na lohena kartavyaṃ hitamicchatā /

SAA.19.64b:

ardhacitraṃ na kartavyaṃ lohabimbaṃ kadācana //

KRA.20.166a:

ardhacitraṃ na kurvīta lohajaṃ mṛṇmayaṃ tathā //

² *SAA*.68.21-22a:

jarjharairapi saMyukte'pyantassuśirasaMyute /

evaṃ doṣasamāyukte kautuke snapane'pi vā //

anyadbimbaṃ samādāya prāyaścittaṃ suhūyatām /

³ *SAA*.25.20:

uktalakṣaṇasampannaṃ kautukaṃ sthāpayedyadi /

mahābere ca ye doṣāḥ sarvaṃ naśyanti tena vai //

⁴ *SAA*.25.8a:

kārayeddarśaniyaṃ ca prabhāṃ pīṭhaṃ prthak tathā /

dimensions which includes the ornaments, garments and attributes (*āyudhas*).¹ The bee wax is kept in the container on the tripod and melted in mild fire, says Marīci.² The melted bee-wax must be purified by filtering through a new cloth before making the model icon, thus Atri³ and Marīci⁴ insist. The processed bee wax is known as '*siktha*' or '*snigdha*'.⁵ The *siktha* is beaten and rolled for the softness.⁶ This material is used to create the model icon which becomes the mould inside the *garbha*.

The second step is the creation of *garbha* (core). The clay, both fine and normal is smeared on the bee wax model, dried for some time, once again smeared and finally iron tapes or metallic strips are wound around the core to strengthen in order to avoid bursting and cracking at the time of drying as well as pouring the molten metal inside the *garbha*. The *garbha* is heated and the wax is drained out.⁷

¹ PRA.9.53a:

mānonmānapramāṇena matimān śilpinā caret /

SAA.19.61b-62a:

snigdham kṛtvātha tenaiva sarvāṅgam pūrṇameva tat //

vidhinā bhūṣaṇairyuktaṁ darśaniyaṁ ca kārayet /

SAA.25.7b:

kārayeddarśaniyaṁ ca prabhāṁ pīṭhaṁ prthak tathā /

YAJ.18.14b:

sthapatirguruṇā sārddham kṛtvā tatpratimāṁ śubham //

VAK.22, p.154:

... paścācchilpinamāhūya tena sikthena bimbaṁ salakṣaṇaṁ kṛtvā...

² VAK.22, p.154:

... śilpinamāhūya aṅgaṇe gomayenopalipya tanmadhye tripadīm cullīm vā sanyasya agniṁ nidhāya śuddhe pātre madhūcchiṣṭaṁ prakṣipya culyāmāropya prāṇmukhena śilpinā samenaṅginā pācayitvā ...

³ SAA.25.7a:

... madhūcchiṣṭaṁ ca samśodhya śilpaśāstravidhānataḥ /

⁴ VAK.22, p.154:

... navavastreṇotpūya ...

⁵ SAA.19.61b:

snigdham kṛtvātha tenaiva sarvāṅgam pūrṇameva tat //

⁶ VAK.22, p.154:

tatsikthamādāya ... abhimarśanādi kārayet /

In modern casting technique, *guggulu* is mixed with the bee wax to retain softness for some time. *Sārasvatīya citrakarmasāstra* and other *śilpa* works mention this. However, the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* are silent in this regard.

⁷ KJK.47, p.100:

... ubhayoḥ pārśvayoḥ samagrāścaivaṁ kṛtvā bahirmṛttikayā ālipya ...

PRA.9.53b-54a:

The third step is casting of metal icon and finishing work. The *garbha* is well heated before the molten metal is poured in.¹ The *Āgamas* insist on the casting work only in the night,² probably for concentration and adjustment of the climate. This takes place after performance of certain sacrificial rituals. The mould with metal poured in should be kept till it becomes cool and solid or strong.³ The next day morning, the outer shell should be broken carefully to take out the unfinished metal icon.¹

śanairālipyā saṁśoṣya mṛdbhīṣca bahirāyasañ //
paṭṭairābadhya vidhinā punarālipyā śoṣayet /

SAA.19.62b-63a:

ślakṣṇayaiva mṛdā beramālipyāiva ca tatpunaḥ //
srāvayitvā maddhūcchiṣṭaṁ tāmraṁ samyak pratāpya ca /

SAA.25.8b-9:

kārayitvā vidhānena bahirmṛttikayā punaḥ //
ālepayecca saṁśoṣya tadgarbhamayasā bahiḥ /
rakṣārthaṁ bandhayitvaiva mṛdamālipyā śoṣayet //

YAJ.18.15:

śanairālipyā mṛduna (mṛdā caiva) punarālipyā śoṣya ca /
paṭṭairābadhya vidhinā punarālipyā śoṣya ca //

VAK.22, p.154-155:

... *tadbahirmṛttikāṁ śanairālipyā saṁśoṣya tadbahirayaḥ paṭṭairbandhayitvā ...*

¹ KJK.47, p.100:

... *rātrāveva śubharkṣe śubhahorāyāṁ yathocitaṁ lohamādāyoddipyā srāvayet /*

PRA.9.55b:

yuktaṁ siddhaṁ ca samprāpya taṁ ca garbhaṁ pratāpayet //

SAA.25.11b:

śubhe dine tathā kuṇḍe hutvā homaṁ ca pūrvavat /
madhūcchiṣṭaṁ ca saṁsrāvyā bimbagarbhaṁ pratāpya ca //

YAJ.18.16b-18a:

tathā lohaṁ samabhyarcya lohapātreṣu sannyaset //
jalatulyakramādrātrāvagninā pācayediyathā /
yuktyā siddhaṁ ca saṁsrāvyā tasmin garbhaṁ pratāpayet //
punassantaptalohena atvarastvabhipūrayet /

VAK.22, p.154-155:

... *punaḥ śubhe dine pūrvaddhutvā tadbimbagarbhaṁ ...*

VAK.22, p.155:

... *pratāpya madhūcchiṣṭaṁ saṁsrāvyā punastadbimbagarbhaṁ pratāpya*
santaptalohena śilpibhistajjñairbimbagarbhamatvareṇa pūrayet /

² KJK.47, p.100:

... *rātrāveva śubharkṣe śubhahorāyāṁ ...*

SAA.25.14a:

tataḥ prabhāta ācāryo yajamānasamanvitaḥ /

YAJ.18.18b:

tataḥ prabhāte kartā ca śilpī tadguruṇā saha //

The term 'rātrau eva' is found in *Kāśyapa Jñānakāṇḍa*. In other texts, the post-casting work is prescribed as an activity of the next day morning. This implies the casting work to take place in the previous night.

³ SAA.25.13:

Atri defines the complete casting- presence of all parts of the body, presence of all *lakṣaṇas* whatever found on the bee wax moulding, attributes and ornaments properly attached together.² The authors were aware of certain difficulties in the casting, i.e. *khaṇḍita* (broken), *sphuṭita* (cracks) and *asampūrṇa* (incompletion of the *garbha*). In such, it is considered just the metal but not the icon. In any of the problem, the trio, i.e. *ācārya*, *yajamāna* and *śilpin* should inspect the output and should decide the remaking of bee wax model and casting.³

The installation of the metal icons with cracks, interior cavity (*antar-garbha*) and improper components is considered to be *ābhicārika*. Therefore,

*lohapūrṇaṁ tu samrakṣyed yāvatsyācchītaṁ dṛḍham /
lohabimbakriyāṁ vātha sarvatraivaṁ samācaret //*

¹ PRA.9.55c:

śanaīrmṛdbhedanaṁ kṛtvā vidhinā beramāharet //

SAA.19.63b-64a:

*tattāmaṁ srāvayettatra beramevaṁ prakalpayet //
śodhayitvaiva tadberaṁ sthāpanārambhamācaret //*

SAA.25.14:

*tataḥ prabhāta ācāryo yajamānasamanvitaḥ /
mṛdbhedam ca śanaīḥ kṛtvā bimbaśuddhiṁ ca kārayet //*

YAJ.18.18b-19a:

*tataḥ prabhāte kartā ca śilpi tadguruṇā saha //
śanaīrmṛdbhdanaṁ kṛtvā doṣān samyak parikṣayet //*

VAK.22, p.155:

*... prabhāte snātvā ācāryo yajamānaśca śilpinā śanaīśśanaīḥ mṛdbhedam kārayitvā
bimbaśuddhiṁ ca kārayet //*

² SAA.25.15:

*sarvāṅgamapi sampūrṇaṁ lakṣaṇairapi saṁyutam /
sahajairbhūṣaṇairyuktaṁ yadi bimbaṁ samāharet //*

³ KJK.47, p.100:

... tatrāṅgahinādidoṣeṣu punarlohavādācaret ...

SAA.19.64a:

śodhayitvaiva tadberaṁ sthāpanārambhamācaret //

SAA.25.16-17:

*bhinne chinne'pyasampūrṇe khaṇḍite sphuṭite tathā /
lakṣaṇaiśca vihinē tu tadbimbaṁ lohavadbhavet //
pūrvoktahomaṁ hutvaiva pūrvavadvidhinā punaḥ /
bimbaṁ lakṣaṇasaṁyuktaṁ kārayitvā samāharet //*

YAJ.18.19b-20:

*khaṇḍādisphuṭitairdoṣairduṣṭe sati punarguruḥ //
ālocya doṣamalpaṁ ca dūṣite yadi vā caret //
pūrvavadberamāhṛtya yathāpūrvam tathā caret //*

VAK.22, p.155:

*tadbimbasrāvitamaṁpūrṇaṁ khaṇḍitaṁ sphuṭitaṁ yadi bhavet tadberaṁ lohavat smṛtvā
pūrvavaddhomaṁ hutvā bimbamāharet //*

utmost care must be taken in casting of the metal icons, thus insist the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*. However, the alternative measures i.e. repair is admissible in case of mild repairable icons, the same way repair is carried on in the *jirṇoddhāraṇa* (renovation).

The finishing works include two important activities – a) deposit of precious stones (*ratna-nyāsa*),¹ and, b) fixing of pedestal (*jaṭibandhana*).² *Ratna-nyāsa* is considered to be very essential for the permanent presence of the divinity in the icon.³

As far as the metal icons are concerned, in the socket of the *padmapīṭha*/pedestal, nine precious stones (*nava-ratna*) are placed at the level of *ūrdhva-padma*. The inside rim of the upper part of the *pīṭha* is meant for this. In the installation of *dhruva-bera* the precious stones are placed in the cavity of the *ādhārapīṭha*, the support of the main icon. The icon of seated Viṣṇu (Accn.No. 15) in Government Museum, Chennai is the classical example for the concept of *ratna-nyāsa*, but the *ratnas* are found placed in the middle of the lower *pīṭha* rather interior part of the rim.

After fine carving work the metal icon is fit on the pedestal which is known as *jaṭibandhana*. The metal icon is created and cast separately in two parts - a) the *pīṭha* and, b) the body of the icon from *kirīṭa* to the metal foot-plate (*phalakā*). The lower most part of the main icon (*phalakā* attached to the feet of the icon) is inserted into the socket (on top) of the pedestal after depositing the precious gems (*ratna*) into it. The rim of the pedestal is

¹ KJK.47, p.100:

... *ratnāni mantrato nyasya* ...

SAA.25.18-19a:

ratnanyāsaṁ na kuryāccet sānnidhyaṁ na bhaveddhareḥ /
pīṭhayukte ca tatpadme mantrairuktakrameṇa vai //
navaratnāni vinyasya śilpinā susthitaṁ dṛḍham /

² KJK.47, p.100:

... *tatra saṁsthāpya tataḥ śilpinā dṛḍhikaraṇaṁ kārayet /*

SAA.25.18b-19a:

pīṭhayukte ca tatpadme mantrairuktakrameṇa vai //
navaratnāni vinyasya śilpinā susthitaṁ dṛḍham /

³ SAA.25.18a:

ratnanyāsaṁ na kuryāccet sānnidhyaṁ na bhaveddhareḥ /

hammered and folded inside which grips strongly the *phalakā* of the main icon and the pedestal is adjusted so as to appear one piece. Atri specifies that the icon is placed on the pedestal should not bend/ lean and hilt.¹

There are some special specimens in the Government Museum, Chennai to understand the different types of *jaṭibandhana* on the pedestal both with open and closed sockets. In some icons both the pedestal and the main icon are cast together, hence, there is no *jaṭibandhana*, probably there could have been certain practices where the small icons are not cast in two parts. The icon with the foot-plate is observed in *jaṭibandhana*. In some icons, from *kirita* to *padmapīṭha* is a single cast. In such, the *padmapīṭha* is placed and fit on the *upapīṭha* (Accn.No.15).

To prove the rule that the foot of seated Viṣṇu icon to be placed on *padmapīṭha*, a unique specimen is available in the Government Museum, Chennai. In this separately cast *pada- padmapīṭha* is inserted on the upper part of the *upapīṭha* and the main icon with *padmapīṭha* is placed on *upapīṭha* and *jaṭibandhana* has been applied (Accn.Nos. 555/66, 878/79).

It is interesting to note that the attribute *gadā* has played differently in *jaṭibandhana*. In some icons, the *gadā* is part of the main icon where its lower end is placed on the foot-plate (Accn.Nos.3, 4, 625/68). In some icons, *gadā* is cast separately (Accn.No.2). As such, during the *jaṭibandhana*, the upper end of the *gadā* is inserted in the socket of the palm and the lower end is inserted into a socket on the pedestal.

¹ SAA.25.19:

avakramacalanā cāpi pīṭhapadme suyojayet //

CHAPTER V

STUDY OF ICONS OF VIṢṆU ACCORDING TO ĀGAMAS

5.1. Philosophy of Vaiṣṇava Āgamas

Both *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra* traditions elaborately speak of the Supreme Being i.e. Viṣṇu/Vāsudeva in five forms viz. Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Arcā and Antaryāmin. As far as the last triad is concerned, both the *Āgamic* traditions are alike. The differences are only in the view of Para and Vyūha.

Amongst them, in the form of Antaryāmin, the Supreme One resides in every being as the witness and inner controller. Arcā is icon installed in the temples and houses for *parārtha-pūjā* and *ātmārtha-pūjā* respectively. Vibhava is the incarnations of the Supreme Being like Matsya, Kūrma, and so on.

5.1.1. Concept of Para and Vyūha in *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*

Viṣṇu¹ is the Supreme Brahman, most unique (*kūṭastha*), the subtle and He is comprised of mere *sattva*. He is endowed with the divine qualities viz. *dharma*, *jñāna*, *vairāgya* and *aśvarya*. He exists in everything as their unique characteristic *Paramātman*, with his own thoughts (*sankalpa*) alongwith His Consorts and *āyudhas*, resides in the twelve-storeyed golden abode in his celestial world. The same Supreme One by His thoughts manifests in four forms viz. Viṣṇu, Mahāviṣṇu, Sadāviṣṇu and Vyāpin/Sarvavyāpin who dwell in the four worlds (*Viṣṇu-lokas*) viz. Āmoda, Pramoda, Śammoda, and Vaikuṇṭha respectively, all existing one above another. Four types of *mokṣa* viz. Sālokya,

¹ KJK.77, p.144:

*viṣṇuḥ puruṣaḥ satyo'cyuto'niruddha iti pañca mūrtayaḥ / teṣāmadīḥ paramo viṣṇuḥ
yukto dharmam jñānamaiśvaryaṁ vairāgyamīti caturbhīrguṇaiḥ / tasmādādimūrtereva
bhinnāḥ puruṣādyāścāśro mūrtayaḥ / dharmeṇa guṇena bhinnāḥ puruṣamūrtiḥ jñānena
satyamūrtiraiśvareṇācyutamūrtirvairāgyenāniruddhamūrtiḥ /*

The same details are available also in *Prakīrṇādhikāra* (33.13-21a), *Vimānārcanākalpa* (*Paṭala*.78, p.494-495 and *Paṭala*.95, p.509) and *Yajñādhikāra* (27.23b-24a).

Sāmīpya, Sārūpya and Sāyujya, are attainable by reaching the worlds Āmoda, Pramoda, Sammoda and Vaikuṇṭha respectively, states Marīci.¹

The *Parabrahman* Viṣṇu is different from other four. The first *Vyūha* forms of manifestation and the addition of the Supreme Viṣṇu in this group tallies with the epithet ‘*Caturvyūhātman*’ applicable to the *Parabrahman* Viṣṇu, Ādimūrti or the Primeval One of all. This is the first stage of manifestation.

In the second stage of manifestation, Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta and Aniruddha emerged from Viṣṇu, Mahāviṣṇu, Sadāviṣṇu and Vyāpin respectively. All of them inherit the qualities of their source.

In the practical and functional level of *dhyāna* (meditation) and *pūjā* (worship), the second group of manifestations viz. Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta and Aniruddha are considered in addition to Viṣṇu, the Supreme One. Therefore, the *Vyūha* consists of five members. *Dhruva-bera*, representing Viṣṇu installed in the sanctum sanctorum must be in *uttama daśa-tala* even in case of the *avatāras* to be fashioned in lower *tāla* system.

The four *Vyūha* forms viz. Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta and Aniruddha stand for four *yugas*, four *vargas* (life stages), four castes, four *Vedas* and giver of welfare to four castes. However, they are the manifestation of the Supreme One i.e. Viṣṇu and including him, they are the representation of Fivefold Manifestation of the Primeval Manifestation.² The *Vaikhānasa* tradition equates the *Vyūha* manifestations with other well-known objects realized in the world³. The Fivefold Manifestation represents five types of *agni* (fire) viz. Sabhya, Āhavanīya, Anvāhārya, Gārhapatya and Āvasathya.

¹ VAK.94, p.508:

*Samśārabandhanavāsanāt muktih mokṣaḥ / Tadapi samārādhana viśeṣāt
caturvidhapadāvāptih sālōkyam samīpyam sārūpyam sāyujyamīti*

² KJK.77, p.144-145:

*etā mūrtayaścaturyugāḥ caturvargāḥ caturvarṇāḥ caturvedāḥ caturvarṇasamṛddhipradā
bhavanti / ādimūrterekasyaiva pañcabhedakalpanam pañcamūrtividhānam /*

³ VAS.3.176b-179a:

*viṣṇum ca puruṣam satyamacyutam cāniruddhakam //
tathaiva pañcadhā vahniṁ śuddhiṁ caiva tu pañcakam //
kālam pañcaavidhaṁ jñeyamabhigamyādi pañcakam //*

The Sundaravarada Perumal temple at Uttaramerur is the best proof to state that the *vyūha* doctrine of *Vaikhānasa* tradition had promoted marvelous and highly systematic designs of the temples. For the installation of the five *Vyūha* forms (*Pañca-mūrti-pratiṣṭhā*), the structure must be two-storeyed; in *Ṣaṇ-mūrti-pratiṣṭhā* i.e. the installation of six forms (five *Vyūha* forms and *Yogaśayana*), the structure must be three-storeyed; for *Nava-mūrti-pratiṣṭhā* i.e. the installation of nine forms (five *Vyūha* forms, *Yogaśayana*, *Narasimha*, *Varāha*, *Nara-Nārāyaṇa*), the structure must be three-storeyed.

In addition to the above, the *Vaikhānasa* tradition prescribes two sub-*vyūha* forms viz. *Daivika-vāsudeva* and *Mānuṣa-vāsudeva*. While he is human form, he is called *Mānuṣa-vāsudeva* and, in his divine form, he is *Daivika-vāsudeva*¹. *Daivika-vāsudeva* is in the celestial Abode and another is manifestation/*vibhava* in the world.

In the form of *Mānuṣa-vāsudeva*, like human form, the icon of *Vāsudeva* is fashioned in *madhyama daśa-tāla* measure and he is two-armed holding *cakra* and *śankha*. In this, the icon of *Mānuṣa-vāsudeva* is accompanied with that of *Rukmiṇī*, *Balabhadra*, *Pradyumna*, *Aniruddha*, *Sāmba*, *Garuḍa* and *Brahmā*.

āsanam pañcadhā proktaṁ pṛthivyādini pañcakam /
śabdāścaitāni pañcaite śrotrādyādiṣu pañcakam //
prāṇāpānādi pañcaite ... /

¹ KJK.86, p.163:

aṭha vasudevādudbhūto vāsudevaḥ / sa manuṣyarūpadharaṇāt mānuṣavāsudevaḥ
devarūpadharaṇāt daivikavāsudevaśceti dvividho bhavati /

SAA.61.1b:

vāsudevo dvidhā bhūtaḥ mānuṣyo daivikastviti //

The icon of Daivika Vāsudeva¹ must be in seated stance on the *simhāsana*. Here Vāsudeva, fashioned in *daśa-tāla* measure, is four-armed and is accompanied with Śrī and Bhū as applicable to His divine form. He holds *cakra* and *śankha* on the backhands. The front right hand bears *abhaya-mudrā* and the left is in *kaṭyavalambita* pose. Female divinities are depicted holding lotus or any flower in one hand and other one dangling down (*prasārīta*).

5.1.2. Concept of Para and Vyūha in Pāñcarātra Āgamas

Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Being hence, the Brahman/Parabrahman and refuge of all. He is without beginning (*anādi*) hence, without end (*ananta*). He is known as Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa, etc. He is *Bhagavān* possessing six divine qualities² viz. *Jñāna* (wisdom), *Śakti* (power), *Bala* (strength), *Aiśvarya* (sovereignty), *Vīrya* (virility) and *Tejas* (luster).

It is stated in *Sātvata Samhitā*, “Thee God who assumes body comprising six attributes, who is resplendent with shining lustre and who bears hands and feet all over and eyes, heads and mouths all over, that one is described as One supreme Being as also shelter of all.”³

Vyūha theory is presented well in the *Pāñcarātra* works differently. Vāsudeva, the Supreme Being, split Himself on the strength of variation of attributes and remains on all cardinal directions in four forms Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha.⁴ Vāsudeva dwells on the east with all

¹ The form is detailed in *Khilādhikāra* (19.215-220), *Samūrtārcanādhikaraṇa* (61.12-21a) and *Vimānārcanākalpa* (Paṭala.60, p.385)

² *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, VI.5.79:

*Jñānaśaktibalāiśvarya-vīryatejāṁśyaśeṣataḥ /
bhagavacchabdavācyāni vinā heyaguṇādhībhiḥ //*

Pādma (*Jñāna*), 5.35b:

śāḍguṇyavigrahaṁ sarvaśaktisvāśrayamāśritam //

³ *Sātvata*, 1.25-26a: (translated by P.P. Apte)

śāḍguṇyavigrahaṁ devaṁ bhāsvajjvalanatejasam /

sarvataḥ pañipādaṁ tat sarvato'kṣīṣiromukham //

param etat samākhyātaṁ ekaṁ sarvāśrayaṁ prabhum /

⁴ *Sātvata*, 3. 5:

prāgbhāgād uttaraṁ yāvad guṇabhedena lāṅgalin /

vibhajatyātmanātmānaṁ vāsudevaḥ paraḥ prabhuh //

His six qualities.¹ He, in the form of Saṅkarṣaṇa endowed with *Jñāna* and *Bala*, resides on the south.² In the form of Pradyumna possessed with *Aiśvarya* and *Vīrya*, He dwells on the west.³ Aniruddha, another manifestation of Vāsudeva and possessor of *Tejas* and *Śakti*, resides on the north.⁴ Thus, the *Pāñcarātra* tradition, speaks of four-fold Vyūha concept common to all four types of Vyūha viz. *turiya*, *suṣupti*, *svapna* and *jāgrat*. Although they are same in all, the forms and descriptions change. Even though He is formless, yet he is embodiment of *vyūhas* characterized by *guṇas* (qualities).⁵

*Pādma saṁhita*⁶ offers a different view on the emanations of the *Vyūha* forms. Vāsudeva, the Supreme Being, the cause of creation, sustenance and dissolution, spilt Himself into two, the first one being Vāsudeva with the complexion of crystal and the second one being Nārāyaṇa with the hue of thick cloud; Saṅkarṣaṇa, higher in *Jñāna*, emerged from Vāsudeva, endowed with all six qualities; Pradyumna, higher in *Bala*, emanated from Saṅkarṣaṇa; and, Aniruddha, higher in *Aiśvarya*, emerged from Pradyumna.

In addition, another sub-vyūha group consisting of twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu, all incarnations and universal materials emerged from these four Vyūha

¹ *Sātvata*.3.6a:

anujjhitasvarūpastu prāgbhāge ṣaḍguṇātmanā /

² *Sātvata*.3.6b:

balasaṁvalitenaiva jñānenāste'tha dakṣiṇe //

³ *Sātvata*.3.7a:

aiśvareya tu vīryeṇa pratyagbhāge'vatiṣṭhate /

⁴ *Sātvata*.3.7b:

tejaśśaktyātmanā saumye saṁsthitaḥ parameśvaraḥ //

⁵ *Sātvata*.3.8a:

yadyapyarūpo bhagavān vyūhātmā guṇalakṣaṇaḥ /

⁶ *Pādma (Jñāna)*.2.16-20:

sa vāsudevo bhagavān sṛṣṭisthityantamuktidaḥ /
ātmanā ca dvidhā cakre punaḥ kenāpi hetunā //
taforeko vāsudevaḥ śuddhasphaṭikasannibhaḥ /
nārāyaṇo dvitīyastu nilāmbudasamaprabhaḥ //
saṅkarṣaṇo vāsudevāt tasmāt pradyumnasamñītaḥ /
pradyumnādaniruddho'bhūtsarve ete caturbhjāḥ //
jñānādiguṇasāmānye vāsudevaḥ prakīrtitaḥ /
ṣaṇṇām guṇānām vaiśāmye vakṣyante mūrtayaḥ kramāt //
jñānādhiko bhavedbrahman saṅkarṣaṇasamāhvayaḥ /
bale'dhikastu pradyumnaḥ syādaiśvare'niruddhakaḥ //

forms.¹ Amongst them, Keśāva, the first of the twenty-four forms, emanated from the first form of Vyūha i.e. Vāsudeva.²

5.2. Types of icons

Both *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra* traditions mainly focus on the iconic worship by which the Parabrahman is attainable. It is stated in *Parama samhitā*³ (*Pāñcarātra*) that the Supreme One is worshipable in the form of icon; the human beings achieve their goal through the iconic worship. It is not possible to worship the Supreme Being in formless (*nirākāra*) state and this form is not suitable for contemplation and praise; the iconic form is created by the Lord Himself who gets the four-armed form for benefit of the devotees. The value of iconic worship is reiterated in *Śrīpraśna saṁhitā*⁴ that the Nārāyaṇa assumes the iconic form for the happiness of the devotees and He resides in the icons for the worship and accomplishment.

The terms *bimba*, *bera*, *mūrti*, *arcā* and *vigraha* are synonymous meaning 'icon'. Sometimes, even the term '*kautuka*' used in the sense of icon. In both the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamic* traditions, different types of functional icons are prescribed. Their functions are almost same but the concept may vary in some cases.

¹ *Pādma (Jñāna)*.2.21:

*mūrtibhyaśca caturbhyaśca caturviṁśatimūrtayaḥ /
jāyante kramaśo brahman dipāddipāntaraṁ yathā //*

² *Pādma (Jñāna)*.2.22b:

vāsudevādādidivāt prathamāt keśavastathā //

³ *Parama*.3.5-10a:

*mūrtimāneva pūjyo'sāvamūrterna tu pūjanam /
kāryārtham mūrtayastasya lokānugrahaḥetavaḥ //
ataḥ puruṣarūpeṇa kalpayitvā tamacyutam /
abhyarcya parayā bhaktyā siddhiṁ gacchanti mānavāḥ //
nirākāre tu deveṣe nārcanaṁ sambhavaṇṇam /
na ca dhyānaṁ na ca stotraṁ tasmāt sākāramarcayet //
ākāre tu kṛtā pūjā stutirvā dhyānameva vā /
vidhinā śāstradr̥ṣṭena deva eva kṛtā bhavet //
bhaktyā paramayākr̥ṣṭo devadevasya yogibhiḥ /
teṣāmanugrahārthāya rūpaṁ bheje caturbhujaṁ //
tasmātenaiva rūpeṇa devadevaṁ samarcayet /*

⁴ *Śrīpraśna*.18.18-91a:

*yuṣmākaṁ prīṭaye'haṁ vai bimbarūpaṁ samāsthitaḥ /
tatra tatra vasiṣyāmi pūjayiṣyantu nityaśaḥ //
yuṣmākamiṣṭasiddhiṁ ca dāsyāmyatra na saṁśayaḥ /*

5.2.1. Types of icons in *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*

Five varieties of icons viz. *dhruva-bera*, *kautuka-bera*, *utsava-bera*, *snāna-bera* (*snapana-bera* *tīrtha-bera*) and *bali-bera* are prescribed in the *Vaikhānasa* works. All the five types represent the Supreme Being like *agni* (fire) is represented in five forms like *gārhapatya*, etc. The temple (with both main and sub-shrines) is defined in three grades based on the presence of the icons. *Uttama* grade means the presence of both *dhruva-bera* and *kautuka-bera*; *madhyama* grade is *ekabera* mode of worship; and worship on pedestals or an elevated platform (*pīṭha*) is of inferior (*adhama*) quality.¹

The *dhruva-bera*, stable form (*acala*) of Viṣṇu, is the depository of the energy/power of the Supreme One or any deity invoked in it.² On every function, the *śakti* (vital power) instilled in the *dhruva-bera* is partly carried to *kautuka-bera* (*cala* form) and other icons in the way *Agni* (fire) is carried from *yāga-kunḍa* of the *gārhapatya* to others like *āhavanīya*;³ this can be compared to lighting one lamp from the other.⁴ However, after the conclusion of the

¹ KRA.5.314, 315c:

*sarveṣāṃ parivārāṇāṃ dhruvakautukasāṃyutam /
uttamaṃ caikaberantu madhyamaṃ samudāhṛtam //
arcanam tvadhamam proktam pīṭham cedālayāśrayam //*

² KJK.73 p.132:

dhyānena cale kautubimbe nityam yatkriyate taccalam /

³ KJK.68 p.121:

*yathā gārpadyadāhavanīyādiṣvagnim praṇiya juhōti dhruvaberāt kautukaberādiṣu
samāvāhyārcayet /*

⁴ KJK.68 p.120:

dīpāddīpamiva dhruvaberādevam kautukabimbe arcāyām autsave cāvāhayet /

VĀS.15.8:

*kautukam cotsavam caiva snapanam ca tathaiva ca /
dhruvaberāt samāvāhya dīpāddīpamiva kramāt //*

YAJ.29.60b-61:

*dhruvaberāt tathā śaktim dīpāddīpamiva kramāt //
kautuke samyagāhvāhya snapane cotsave tataḥ /
dhyāyannāvāhayedvidvān dhruvāttatkramaśaḥ sudhīḥ //*

YAJ.31.6b:

sādhayitvā dhruvācchaktim dīpāddīpamiva kramāt //

YAJ.31.18b-19:

*kumbhācchaktim samādāya dhruvabere ca pūrvavat //
samāvāhya dhruvācchaktim snāpane cotsave tataḥ /
balibere samāvāhya krameṇaiva tathārcayet //*

relevant rituals, the power is transferred to *dhruva-bera* vice versa.¹ The *dhruva* icons may be made of processed earth (*mṛd*), wood (*dāru*), stone (*śilā*), metal (*loha*) and gem / precious stones (*ratna*).²

The *dhruvabera* is prescribed in two types viz. *dhruva* and *dhruvārcā*. The *dhruva* icon is one in addition to that of *kautuka*. *Dhruvārcā* icon serves the purpose of both *dhruva* and *kautuka* icons³ (*dhruva kautuka aikye*) where a separate *kautuka* icon cannot be set up.⁴ In *dhruvārcā* aspect, Viṣṇu can be depicted in any stance i.e. *sthānaka* (standing), *āsina* (seated) and *yānaka* (moving or mounted on vehicle) but not in *śayana* (recumbent pose).⁵

Dhruva-bera in *Vaikhānasa* tradition is classified, on the basis of stance into three major groups viz. *sthānaka* (standing), *āsina* (seated) and *śayāna* (recumbent) which are further classified into four viz. *yoga*, *bhoga*, *vīra* and *viraha/ābhicārika* on account of the presence of consorts and their position; further, they are sub-classified in three grades viz. *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama* with reference to clustering icons of consorts, sages and attendants.

Kautuka-bera, meant for daily worship (*nitya-pūjā*),⁶ is also mentioned with the term '*arcā*'.⁷ The *kautuka-bera* is called so because it yields the prosperity and auspiciousness to all⁸. *Kautuka-bera* is the representation of

¹ KJK.73 p.134:

yathā uktahomānte agnimāhavanīyād gārhapatyē samāropayati tathā
kautukabimbāddhruvabere devaṁ samāropayati /

² VAK.64 p.399:

sauvarṇaṁ rājataṁ tāmrajaṁ śilājaṁ dāraṁ ratnajaṁ vā ardhacitraṁ vā kārayaet /

³ KRA.8.143b, 146b:

dhruvakautukasanyuktaṁ dhruvārcanamiti smṛtaṁ //
dhruvakautukayoraikye dhruvārcanamudāhṛtaṁ //

⁴ VAK.72 p.449:

dhruvaberaṁ arcāberaṁ pūrvat kartumayuktaṁ cet dhruvārcāberamekameva kṛtvā
pratiṣṭhāpya arcayedīti kecīti /

⁵ VAK.15 p.69:

dhruvārcā cet sthānakamāsināṁ yānakaṁ vā sarvāṅgasampūrṇaṁ suvyaktaṁ kārayet /

⁶ KLA.20.7a:

kuryātkautukabimbe vai nityapūjāṁ yathākramam /

⁷ SAA.24.1b:

arcā ca kautukaṁ prāṇo vara ekārthavācakāḥ //

⁸ SAA.24.2b:

sarvamaṅgalakāritvāt kautukaṁ hyabhidhiyate //

Viṣṇu's *sakala* and *sthūla* form, which is the cause of all. The *kautuka* icon is mobile (*cala*) form of the *dhruva* aspect of Viṣṇu, Who is *nitya* (eternal), *sūkṣma* (subtle) and *akṣara* (indiminishable)¹. installation of *kautuka-bera* without *dhruva-bera* is *ābhicārika*. The *kautuka-bera* of Matsya and Kūrma and other *avatāra* forms of Viṣṇu must be four-armed Viṣṇu in standing stance².

Kautuka-bera plays an important role in the rituals and ceremonies like ceremonial bath (*abhiṣeka*). Therefore, *kautuka-bera*, made of metal, should not be worn-out and free from the common defects i.e. pores and hollow.³ At the necessity of the renovation of the *dhruva-bera*, its energy is transferred to *kautuka* icon and returned to the same after the repair.⁴ When the *dhruva-bera* is lost or damaged by enemies, the *kautuka* icon serves the purpose as the media of worship till the installation of new *dhruva-bera*.

The *utsava-bera*, meant for all *kāmya* rituals,⁵ is inevitable for the procession during festivals like *nityotsava* and *mahotsava*. It must be made of metal alone and four-armed.⁶ The *utsava-bera* of incarnate forms of Viṣṇu viz.

¹ SAA.36.3, 5b-6a:

*tadrūpaṃ yatparaṃ sūkṣmamakṣaraṃ niṣkalaṃ ca yat /
tatsthānīyaṃ dhruvaṃ beram dhruvarūpaṃ dhruvasya vai //
viṣṇoryatsakalaṃ rūpaṃ sthūlaṃ sarvaśya kāraṇam //
tatsthānīyamiti proktaṃ kautukaṃ tena nityaśaḥ /*

² KRA.6.21:

*kautukaṃ viṣṇumūrtissyād dhruvayormatsyakūrmayoḥ /
anyeśāmavatārāṇāṃ tadvadviṣṇorivātha vā //*

SAA.24.30, 32b-33a:

*vārāhaṃ nārasimhaṃcā rāmaṃ kṛṣṇaṃ tathaiva ca /
kārayetkautukaṃ tadvaccaturbhujamathāpi vā //
dhruve trivikrame vāpi vāmane ca tathaiva ca //
bimbaṃ caturbhujam caivakautukaṃ sthitimeva vā /*

³ SAA.68.21-22a:

*jarjharairapi samyukte'pyantassuśirasamnyute /
evaṃ doṣasamāyukte kautuke snapane'pi vā //
anyadbimbaṃ samādāya prāyaścittaṃ suhūyatām /*

⁴ VAK.72 p.451:

*dhruvabere varṇakṣaye sphuṭitādidōṣasambhave ca alpadoṣe dhruvaberasthām śaktim
kumbhe ambhasi samāvāhya ...kumbhasthām śaktim kautukādiṣu samāvāhya velāyām
kumbhe samāropayet /... kumbhasthām śaktim dhruvabere samāropya dhruvaberāt
kautukādiṣu samāvāhya arcayet /*

⁵ KLA.20.7b:

autsave ca tathā bimbe kāmyakarmāṇi kārayet //

⁶ SAA.24.19b:

śilayā dāruṇā bimbaṃ autsavaṃ na vidhiyate //

Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasimha, Vāmana, Trivikrama, Paraśurāma and Kalkī must be four-armed Viṣṇu in standing stance.¹

Snāna-bera or the *snapana-bera*, known as also *tīrtha-bera*, is meant for the daily bathing ceremony (*abhiṣeka*) as well as for the *tīrthotsava* performed on the concluding day of any festival. The icon must be made of metal and the same worn-out, with pores and hollow yields the adverse result of *ābhicārika*.²

The *bali-bera*, meant for *bali*-offering *bali* (food or *bala*) to all the divine beings (both iconic and uniconic) in the temple precincts and other divine beings.³ This happens almost in all the temples after the completion of the daily worship. This icon functions only for this function. Moreover, the consorts are prohibited in this case.⁴ However, according to Marīci, their icons may be optional.⁵

VAK.22 p.149:

śilayā dāruṇā cotsavaṃ baliberam ca na kārayet /

¹ KRA.6.22:

matsyakūrmavarāhāṇām nṛsimhasya ca kalkinaḥ /
viṣṇumevautsavaṃ kuryājjamadagnisutasya ca //

SAA.24.31-32a:

matsyaṃ kūrmaṃ varahaṃ nārasimhaṃ vāmanam /
trivikramaṃ tathā bimbamautsavaṃ naiva kārayet //
viṣṇuṃ caturbhujam bimbamautsavaṃ tatra kārayet /

² SAA.68.21-22a:

jarjharairapi saṃyukte'pyantassuśirasamṇyute /
evam doṣasamāyukte kautuke snapane'pi vā //
anyadbimbaṃ samādāya prāyaścittam suhūyatām /

³ KJK.104 p.195:

surarṣīmanuṣyānām balaṃ yasmāt pravardhate tasmādbaliriti proktam /

⁴ KRA.6.27b: 31a:

sadārcāṃ baliberaṇca devirahitamācaret //
baliberārcayordevyau naiva kuryādvicakṣaṇaḥ /

KRA.25.79a:

snapanam baliberaṇca devirahitameva vai /

⁵ VAK.40 p.277:

snāpanam bimbaṃ baliberam ca devibhyām sahitaṃ rahitaṃ vā kārayet /

5.2.2. Stances of the Icons and accompaniment of consorts

Kautuka-bera resembles *dhruva-bera* in all aspects including the stance.¹ This should be in standing posture if the *dhruvabera* is in standing stance.² However, that the *kautuka* and *utsava* may be in seated form though the *dhruva* is in standing stance, thus Marīci refers to some other authorities.³ The *kautuka-bera* of incarnations of Viṣṇu should be four-armed Viṣṇu in standing posture.⁴ The same may be in standing or seated posture if the *dhruva-bera* is in

¹ KLA.2.77b:

dhruvānurūpamānena kautukam kārāyadbudhaḥ //

KRA.6.19b:

yadākāram dhruvākāram tadākārañca kautukam //

KRA.21.13b:

yadākāram dhruvam kuryāttadākārāntu kautukam //

SAA.69.132a:

sthāpayet kautukādīmśca dhruvaberānurūpakān //

² KRA.6.20:

āsane sthānakam vātha śayane sthānakāsane //

evam kautukamuddiṣṭam snāpanam sthānakam bhavet //

KRA.21.14-15a:

āsinaṁ vā sthitaṁ vāpi śayanaṁ naiva kautukam //

sthānake sthānakam proktamāsane sthānakāsane //

āsinaṁ sthānakam vāpi śayane parikalpayet //

SAA.68.5-6:

dhruvaberāntu yadrūpaṁ tadrūpaṁ kautukam bhavet //

āsanaṁ sthānakaṁ cātha śayanaṁ cātha kautukam //

āsane sthānakaṁ vāpi śayane sthānakāsane //

anyathā sthāpīte cāsminnajñānena viparyaye //

VAK.22 p.149:

dhruve sthite sthitaṁ āsine cāsinam sthitaṁ vā śayane kautukamāsinaṁ sthitaṁ vā

dhruve sthite'pyāsinaṁ kautukamautsavaṁ ceti kecit / snāpanam sarvatra sthitaṁ eva

kuryāt //

YAJ.17.3-4:

deve sthite sthitaṁ proktamāsine tvāsanam budhāḥ //

śayane sthānakaṁ vātha āsinaṁ vātha kārāyēt //

utsavaṁ snāpanam paścād baliberaṁ viśeṣataḥ //

sarvatra sthānakaṁ kuryāddevibhyāṁ ca yathā tathā //

³ VAK.22 p.149:

dhruve dhruve sthite'pyāsinaṁ kautukamautsavaṁ ceti kecit / snāpanam sarvatra

sthitaṁ eva kuryāt //

⁴ KJK.79 p.152:

matsyakūrmayoḥ dhruvaberameva / kautukam bimbam viṣṇuṁ caturbhujameva kārāyēt

/

PRA.13.10b:

avatārasya sarvasya kautukam syāccaturbhujam //

SAA.24.32b-33a:

matsyaṁ kūrmaṁ varāhaṁ nārasimhaṁ vāmanaṁ //

trivikramaṁ tathā bimbamautsavaṁ naiva kārāyēt //

viṣṇuṁ caturbhujam bimbamautsavaṁ tatra kārāyēt //

seated or reclining posture. Hence, in case of Anantaśayana, the *kautuka-bera* is to be depicted sitting on the couch of Ananta overshadowed with the serpent hood consisting of seven or five heads. The *kautuka* icon must be in standing stance in case the *dhruva-bera* is in *yānaka* aspect. In case of Narasimha, both *dhruva-bera* and *kautuka-bera* are alike.¹

The posture of the *utsava* icon depends on that of *kautuka* icon. Marīci refers to some other authorities that the *utsava-bera* may be in seated form though the *dhruva* is in standing stance.² However, Bhṛgu insists on the standing stance of *utsava-bera*.³ *Utsava-bera* accompanied with the icons of Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī is commended even though the *kautuka-bera* is without the icons of consorts.⁴

The *bali-bera* must be four-armed standing Viṣṇu.⁵ The *snāna-bera* must be in standing stance with four arms. *Snapana-bera* of all incarnatory (*avatāra*) forms must be like that of four-armed Viṣṇu.⁶ The *snāna-bera* and *bali-bera*

SAA.58.15b:

matsyaṁ ca kūrmarūpaṁ ca kautukaṁ na samācaret //

VAK.22 p.149:

*prādurbhāvānāṁ kautukaṁ tattadrūpaṁ viṣṇuṁ caturbhujāṁ vā
matsyakūrmavaraḥavāmanānāṁ tattadrūpaṁ naiva kuryāt //*

VAK.55 p.364-365:

*kautukaṁ viṣṇuṁ caturbhujameva kārayet /tadrūpaṁ na kārayet/ ... kūrmasya
kautukaṁ viṣṇuṁ caturbhujameva kuryāt //*

¹ SAA.59.34:

*nārasimhamidaṁ rūpaṁ paścātsthāpanamucyate /
yadyaddhruvasya rūpantu tattadrūpaṁ tu kautukaṁ //*

² VAK.22 p.149:

dhruve dhruve sthite'pyāsināṁ kautukamautsavaṁ ceti kecit //

³ YAJ.17.4:

*utsavaṁ snāpanaṁ paścād baliberaṁ viśeṣataḥ /
sarvatra sthānakaṁ kuryāddevibhyāṁ ca yathā tathā //*

⁴ KRA.6.26b:

sarvatra devisamyuktau karayet kautukotsavau //

⁵ YAJ.17.4:

*utsavaṁ snāpanaṁ paścād baliberaṁ viśeṣataḥ /
sarvatra sthānakaṁ kuryāddevibhyāṁ ca yathā tathā //*

⁶ KRA.6.20b, 25a:

*evam kautukamuddiṣṭaṁ snāpanaṁ sthānakaṁ bhavet //
snāpanaṁ sarvamūrtināṁ sthānakaṁ syāccaturbhujam //*

YAJ.17.4:

*utsavaṁ snāpanaṁ paścād baliberaṁ viśeṣataḥ /
sarvatra sthānakaṁ kuryāddevibhyāṁ ca yathā tathā //*

should not be accompanied with the icons of the consorts viz. Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī.¹

The *kautuka-bera* should always be fashioned in *uttama daśa-tāla*. Two fifth of the total height of the *dhruvabera* is the best size (*uttama*) of *kautuka-bera*; two third of *uttama* size is of medium grade (*madhyama*); one third of *uttama* is of *adhama* grade.² The *utsava-bera* has the same measurement if the *dhruva-bera* is established in *ekabera* mode.³ *Bali-bera* should have the size of one *tāla* of the *dhruva-bera* i.e. the height of the face of *dhruva-bera*.⁴

5.2.3. Types of icons in Pāñcarātra Āgamas

Icon is considered to be the *jīva* (vital power) of the temples hence, the icon should be created well with all the efforts, thus insist *Vasiṣṭha saṃhitā*⁵ of *Pāñcarātra* tradition.

In *Pāñcarātra* tradition,⁶ the icons (*arcā*) are generally classified into two viz. *sthāpanārcā* and *karmārcā*. *Sthāpanārcā*, obviously *dhruva-bera*, is the icon permanently fixed on a pedestal with *ratna-nyāsa* (deposit of precious stones) and this is made of processed clay etc. other icons made of metals are *karmārcā*, indeed *cala-bera*, for functional purposes. The *karmārcās* are the moveable

¹ KRA.6.27a:

sadārcām baliberañca devīrahitamācaret /

KRA.25.79a:

snāpanam baliberañca devīrahitameva vai /

² KRA.6.16-17a:

dhruvaberāgnibhāge tu dvibhāgam parigrhya ca /
taddvibhāgam tridhā kṛtvā samstañcottamam bhavet //
dvibhāgam madhyamam proktamekabhāgam tathāddhamam /

³ KRA.6.18a:

ekaberam dhruvam cetsyāt tatsamam cautsavam matam /

⁴ KRA.6.18b:

dhruvaberamukhotsedham baliberam prakalpayet //

⁵ *Vasiṣṭha*. 5.35: (cf. Smith, Daniel, op. cit., p.4)

prāsādānām tu sarveṣām pratimā jīva ucyate /
tasmāt sarvaprayatnena pratimām kārayedbudhaḥ //

⁶ *Sanat Kumāra (Brahmarātra)*. 6.17-18: (cf. Smith, Daniel, op. cit., p.7)

karmārcā sthāpanārceti dvividhā parikīrtitā /
yatkṛtā pratimā pūrvaprāsāde mṛṇmayādibhiḥ //
sā sthāpanārcā vijñeyā ratnanyāsopari sthitā /
anyā tu lohajā yātra sā karmārceti kīrtitā //

icons of secondary grade in the temple where as *mūla-bera* (immovable) is primary icon. All others are created for the functional use like bathing etc.¹

According to *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, in addition to the *mūla-bera* (*sthāpanārcā/dhruva-bera*), the *karmabimbās* are six viz. *karmārcā*, *utsavārcā*, *balyārcā*, *tīrthārcā*, *snānārcā*² and *śayanārcā*;³ the temple is considered in three grades depending upon the number of icons in the sanctum sanctorum (*garbhagrha*); the *uttama* grade of temple, all six icons are worshipped; in the *madhyama* grade, there are three icons; and, one icon is in *adhama* grade.⁴

In *eka-bera* mode of worship, one icon of Viṣṇu is installed in the *brahma-pada* (centre). *Bahu-bera* mode consists of other movable icons too. In the last grade i.e. *eka-bera-pūjā*, all functions such as worship and *abhiṣeka* (ceremonial bath) take place on the *mūla-bera* itself.⁵

¹ Viṣvaksena.17.1-2:

*athātaḥ saṁpravakṣyāmi jaṅgamasthāpanaṁ param /
apradhānaṁ ca bimba tu jaṅgamaṁ bimbamuttamam /
prthakcet sarvakarmāṇi bimbaśuddhyarthameva ca /
kārayenmuniśārdūla snānādipratimākriyāṁ //*

² *Snānārcā* is termed as *Nimittasnapanārcā* in the *Īśvara saṁhitā*.

³ Śrīpraśna.14.1-2:

*karmārcādiviśeṣāṇāṁ samjñābhedaṁ ca lakṣaṇam /
upayogastathaiveṣāṁ kathyate kamalekṣaṇe //
karmārcā cotsavārcā ca balyārcā ca tathāpare /
tīrthasnanobhaye syātāmaparā śayanārthikā //*

Īśvara.17.238-239a:

*tatastu karmabimbeṣu viśeṣaḥ kathyate dhunā /
karmārcā cotsavārcā ca balyārcā tīrthakautukam //
nimittasnapanārcā ca śayanārceti ṣaḍvidhāḥ /*

⁴ Śrīpraśna.14.3-4a:

*pūjyante yatra tadberaṁ tām pūjāmuttamāṁ viduḥ /
madhyamaṁ trīṇi bimbāni caramaṁ tvekapūjanam //
bahubere vidhirayamekaberasya vai rame /*

Īśvara.17.240b-241:

*etaiḥ sarvairāṅgabimbairyuktaṁ cenmūlakautukam //
uttamaṁ syāttribhīryuktaṁ madhyamaṁ parikīrtitam //
ekena yuktamadhamam tattanmānamihocyate //*

⁵ Śrīpraśna.14.4-5a:

*bahubere vidhirayamekaberasya vai rame /
mūlārcāyāṁ pūjanaṁ ca snapanam ca bhavet sadā //
tasmāt snapanapūjārthaṁ neṣyate kautukadvayam /*

Īśvara.17.239b-240b:

*arcāḥ kāryāstvīmā viprāḥ bahuberavidhānake //
ekabere tu karmārcāṁ vinā pañca prakalpayet /*

The *mūla-bera* may be in any stance viz. *sthānaka*, *āsana*, *śayana* and *yānaka*. In all stances, except *śāyana* form, Viṣṇu may be depicted with eight, four or two hands.¹ Special injunctions are provided in *Viṣvaksena saṁhitā*² when the *mūla-bera* is recumbent (*śayāna*): *karmaberas* may be four-armed in case the *mūla-bera* is two-armed; the *utsava-bera* may two-armed or four-armed; in case the recumbent *mūla-bera* is eight-armed, *karmabimbās* must be four-armed because two-armed *karmabimbās* destroy everything.

According to *Īśvara saṁhitā*,³ when the *mūla-bera* is *sthānaka* (standing) or mounted on a vehicle (*yānaka*) or seated (*āsina*), other icons must be *sthānaka* or *āsina*. The icon intended for the daily worship should be in the standing stance in all cases. The *kautuka-bera* and other *karma-beras* of *śayana* form must be *sthānaka* (standing) or *āsina* (seated).⁴

¹ *Viṣvaksena*.10.100-101:

*mūlabrādibimbānām svarūpaṁ munisattama /
aṣṭabāhuṁ caturbāhuṁ dvibāhuṁ vātha nārada //
yajamānecchayā kāryā mūlaberādayastviti //
sthānayānāsanām vāpi śayanām vā prakalpayet //*

² *Viṣvaksena*.10.102-108a:

*atra kiñcidviśeṣo'sti śayane munisattama /
aniruddhaṁ tathā padmanābhamūrtimāthāpi vā //
saṁjñātvā lakṣaṇopetaṁ śāyayed vidhicoditam //
yatkrtvā mūlaberaṁ tu dvibhujam ced dvijottama //
karmārcanādibimbānām lakṣaṇam vā caturbhujam //
mūlaberaṁ tu karmārcā dvibhujam cenmunīśvara //
bālādīnām tu bimbānām lakṣaṇam vā caturbhujam //
mahotsavasya bimbasya dvibhujam vā caturbhujam //
śayānasya mayā proktaṁ viśeṣam munisattama //
evamuktaprakāreṇa prātimaṁ kārayed kramāt //
mūlārcā cāṣṭabāhuścet karmārcādi caturbhujam //
dvibhujam yadi cettatra sarvasaṁhārakāraṇam //
tasmāt sarvaprayatnena dvibhujam na prakalpayet //*

³ *Īśvara*.17.246-247a:

*sthite vā vāhanārūḍhe samāsine'pi vā dvijāḥ //
sthitaṁ vāpi samāsināḥ vidhātavyā munīśvarāḥ //
nityotsavārthabimbantu sarvatraiva sthitaṁ bhavet //*

⁴ *Viṣvaksena*.17.10a:

śayitasya tu karmārcā sthānakaṁ tvāsanam tu vā //

The *mūla-bera* of Viṣṇu/Vāsudeva may be in four stances viz. *sthānaka*, *āsina*, *śayāna* and *yānaka*.¹ *Śayana* form is classified into four viz. *bhoga*, *yoga*, *saṁhāra* and *sṛṣṭi*.²

The *Kautuka-bera* of the incarnations of Viṣṇu must be four-armed or two-armed and to be fashioned in *daśa-tāla* measure; they must be made of metal and their icons may be characterized with *śrīvatsa* and *jaṭā-makuṭa*/*kiriṭa*, thus prescribes the *Pādma saṁhitā*.³ The *karma-beras* must be made of pure metals.⁴

The *karma-bimbās* must resemble the *mūla-bera* in all aspects such as signs (attributes), characteristic marks and *āyudhas*.⁵ However, there are certain rules that *karmārcā* of the same form should be adopted. Though the four forms viz. Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are of the same origin, the *mūla-bera* of them cannot be taken with the *kautuka-bera* of another. The *dhruva-bera* of Vāsudeva cannot have the *kautuka-bera* of Saṅkarṣaṇa and so on.⁶

¹ *Bhārgava*.4.88b-89a (cf. Smith, Daniel, op. cit., p.9)

āsinaṁ vā śayānaṁ vā tiṣṭhantaṁ vā yathāruci //
ārūḍhaṁ pakṣirāje vā kalpaye viṣṇuvigrahaṁ //

² *Viṣṇutilaka*.6.412b-413a (cf. Smith, Daniel, op. cit., p.9)

śayiturmūlaberasya śayanaṁ tu caturvidham //
bhogaṁ yogaṁ ca saṁhāraṁ sṛṣṭisaṁjñāṁ caturmukha //

³ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.18.46b-48:

śrīvatsenāṅkitoraskāṇ jaṭāmakuṭasaṁyutān //
kiriṭiṇo vā kurvita karmabimbāṁśca lohajān //
viṣṇoraṁśāvatārāṇāṁ karmārcādyāstu kautukāḥ //
kalpaniyāścaturhastāḥ dvibhujā vā yathāruci //
daśatālena miyante varāhādyāśca mūrtayah //

⁴ *Vasiṣṭha*.4.68b-69a (cf. Smith, Daniel, op. cit., p.7)

karmārcālakṣaṇaṁ vakṣye kauberasya ca sāmpratam //
śuddhalohena kartavyaṁ nānyena tu kadācana //

⁵ *Viṣvaksena*.17.7-9a:

tattatisthāne svamantreṇa saṁsthāpyārcādi nārada //
yadrūpaṁ mūlaberasya yaccihnaiḥ cihnitaṁ purā //
yā mūrtissthāpitā pūrvaṁ mūlācceti mahātmabhiḥ //
yathā cāyudhavinyāsaṁ kathaṁ buddhimatā hareḥ //
karmārcādiṣu bereṣu tat sarvaṁ kārayet tathā //

⁶ *Viṣvaksena*.17.10b-12a:

saṁsthāpya vāsudevākhyāṁ na saṅkarṣaṇamiṣyate //
tathā saṅkarṣaṇaṁ prāpya pradyumnaṁ nārcayedbudhaḥ //
pradyumnasthāpanārcāyāṁ karmārcā nāniruddhikā //

The height of the functional icons (*karmārcā*) depends on that of the *mūla-bera*. As per *Īśvara saṁhitā*,¹ in the five division of height of *mūla-bera*, *utsava-bera* should have the height of two, three or four divisions. In the five division of height of *utsava-bera*, other icons should have the height of two, three or four parts.

*Nāradya saṁhitā*² prescribes the size of the *karmārcās*. Their size should not be less than six *aṅgulas* and not more than twelve *aṅgulas*. This measurement is applicable to also the *tīrtha-bera* and *yātra-bera* (*yānaka-mūrti*). The height of *utsava-bera* should not be less than one *tāla* proportionate to *sthāpanārca* i.e. the height equal to the size of the face, and not more than four *tālas* i.e. multiplication of the height of the face into four times.

The *Pāñcarātra* treatises have different opinions regarding the presence of the consorts viz. Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī. According to *Īśvara saṁhitā*,³ all the six types of icons may be consorted with Śrī and Bhū. On the other hand, the *utsava-bera*, *śayana-bera* and *mūla-bera* may be created with the icons of Śrī and Puṣṭi.

The icon or Viṣṇu for domestic worship (*grhārcā/ātmārtha-pūjā*) is in three grades – the icon of sixteen *aṅgulas* is *uttama* (best); the same of eight

karmārcā sarvathā kāryā mūlabimbānusāriṇi /

¹ *Īśvara*.17.242b-244a:

mūlabimbāsamucchrāyaṁ dvidhā vāpi tridhāpi vā //
utsavārcāṁ taducchrāyaṁ dvidhā vāpi tridhāpi vā //
caturdhā vā saṁvibhajya ekabhāgena kalpayet //

² *Nāradya*.23.112-115a:

mūlārcā lakṣaṇaṁ hyetat karmārcālakṣaṇaṁ śrṇu //
ṣaḍaṅgulāṇna ca nyūnaṁ nādhikaṁ dvādaśaṅgulāt //
pūjābimbaṁ tu kartavyaṁ sarvatraiva vicakṣaṇaiḥ //
evaṁ vai sālabimbasya lakṣaṇaṁ samudāhṛtaṁ //
tīrthayātrārthabimbasyāpyevameva tu lakṣaṇaṁ //
ekatāraṇaṁ na ca nyūnaṁ catustāraṇaṁ na cādhikaṁ //
proktamutsavabimbasya lakṣaṇaṁ munipuṅgava //

³ *Īśvara*.17.244b-245:

bimbaṣaṭkaṁ ca devibhyāṁ sahitaṁ parikalpayet //
athavā cotsavaṁ bimbaṁ tathā śayanakautukaṁ //
śrīpuṣṭisahitaṁ kāryaṁ mūlabimbe dvijottamāḥ //

aṅgulas is *madhyama* (medium); and the icon measuring two *aṅgulas* is *kaniyasa* (low).¹

5.3. System of measurement in Āgamas

Accuracy of dimensions has been insisted right from the Vedic period, in the constructions fire-altar (*yajña-kunḍa*), in making of sacrificial instruments (*sruk*, *sruva*, etc.) or diagrams (*maṇḍala* / *sthaṇḍila*) or icon. The volume of material in the pitchers (*kalaśa*) and pots (*kumbha*) also played important role in the religious and ritualistic fields. Geometrical details in *Śulba-sūtra* stand as one of the best examples in this regard. The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*, following the principles of Vedic ritualistic codes, insist on the accurate dimensions of the icons to be set up in the temple premises.

An icon, made in accordance with the rules, is meritorious (*puṇya*) and it dispels all demerits (*pāpa*) and ensures the enjoyment in both worlds (*aihika* and *āmuṣmika*); the icon created only according to one's thinking destroys everything; therefore, one should make the icons with appropriate measures by following the manuals/hand-books thoughtfully and skillfully, thus asserts Kāśyapa.² Generally all the treatises insist on the same.

There are some prescriptions regarding the *dhruva* icons. First, the *dhruva* should have the proper measure. For, an icon without proper measure is considered defective and it does not serve the purpose of consecration. Even after the creation of the icon, if such problem is noticed, the icon must be renovated or replaced with a new one, after performing some expiatory rituals.³

¹ Viṣvaksena.17.117b-118:

ātmārthayajanaṁ vaksye śṛṇu nārada tattvataḥ //
śoḍaṣāṅgulamutsedhamuttamaṁ saṁpracakṣate //
madhyamaṁ tu tadardhaṁ syāt dvyaṅgulaṁ tu kaṇīyasam //

² KJK.50, p.87:

vidhinā kāritaṁ bera sarvapāpaharaṁ puṇyaṁ bhuktīmuktiphalapradam //
svabuddhikṛtamaśubhaṁ puṇyakīrtivinaśanam // *tasmācchāstraṁ samālambya budhyā*
yuktyā pramāṇayutamevaṁ manoharaṁ kārayet //

³ VAK.63 p.395:

dhruvaberaṁ mānahinaṁ cet ... navikaraṇaṁ kṛtvā kautukādibhissaha pratiṣṭhāṁ
kārayet //

5.3.1. Measurement of icons and *Tāla* system

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* are very particular about the size of the icons and the detailed measurements of every part of the icon. The size here means the size of the *dhruva-bera* and the accompanying icons in the temple premises both inside and outside but within the limits of the temple.

The units of measurement in the vast literature of *Āgamas* are three types – *mānāṅgula*, *matrāṅgula* and *dehalabdhāṅgula*. In this case, there is no much difference between the *Āgamas* and *śilpa-śāstra*. Moreover, the different treatises of the same *Āgama* tradition offer the measurements with slight change or modification, obviously due to influence of regional variations. This too is not applicable for the total height of *tāla* system of icons. Although the accuracy of proper and proportionate measurement of the icon is insisted, deviation of one *yava* to six *yavas* is permitted in the six-fold system of measurement except the total height in a *tāla*.

5.3.2. *Ṣaṭ māna* system of measurements

Six measurements (*ṣaṭ māna*) are prescribed in the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*, identical with that used in other technical works on *śilpa* and *vāstu*. Moreover, the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamic* texts follow the most accurate pattern of measurement on par with other *śilpa* works and they advise to consult the *śilpa-śāstra*.¹

An icon is created with six-fold system of measurement.² They are *māna* (height and vertical measurement), *pramāṇa* (breadth and horizontal measurement), *unmāna* (thickness and diameter), *parimāṇa* (width/circumference), *upamāna* (inter-space or distance between two parts)

¹ VAK.19, p.102:

atrānuktaṁ sarvaṁ śilpaśāstroktavidhinā kārayet /

² *Aniruddha*.12.5-7: (cf. Smith Daniel, op. cit., p.76)

mānapramāṇamunmānaparimāṇopamānakam /

lambamānaṁ ṣaḍetāni mānāni kathayāmyaham //

uttuṅgaṁ mānamityuktamunmānaṁ viśṛtaṁ bhavet /

nābhirmānaṁ pramāṇaṁ syādantaraṁ copamānakam //

sūtaṁ ca lambamānaṁ syādetairmānaiḥ samāyutam /

śanmānaṁ ca tathaiivoktamanyathā doṣakṛdbhavet //

and *lambamāna* (measurement along the plumb-lines or perpendicular lines). These six terms are used in the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* with the usage of various synonyms.

An icon must be made with this six-fold system of measurement.¹ Atri states that the icon without proper dimensions must be abandoned.² Even at the time of renovation of an icon, proper care must be taken to maintain the prescribed measurement of the icon.³ According to Marīci, an icon without appropriate measurements becomes *ābhicārika*.

Accuracy of proper and proportionate measurements of the body of the icon is insisted. However, deviation of one *yava* to six *yavas* does not normally create any problems, thus states Marīci.⁴ Bhṛgu states that in *parimāṇa* the deviation of one *yava* to ten *yavas* (1.2 *aṅgulas*) is admissible.⁵

Tāla system in *Āgamas* and *śilpa-śāstra* is unique feature to create the icons with proper and accurate dimensions using the *Ṣaṇ-māna* formula. This is meant for the proportionate measurement of the icon from the soul of the foot to *uṣṇiṣa* on the top. The height of *kiriṭa* and *pīṭha* is not included in this.⁶

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* mention eleven *tālas* in total which are almost identical with those prescribed by other iconographical texts. However, *sārdhanava-tāla* (9½ *tāla*) is unique aspect generally used for the female icons i.e. Sītā, Rukmiṇi and Satyabāma who are the human forms of divine consort of Viṣṇu.

¹ VAK.22, p.156-157:

*mānaṁ pramāṇaṁ unmānaṁ parimāṇaṁ upamānaṁ lambamānamiti ṣaṇmānāni / ...
ityetaiḥ ṣaḍbhirnmānairyuktaṁ bera kārayet /*

² SAA.76.19a:

pramāṇe caiva hīnē'pi bimba tyājyamiti smṛtam /

³ KLA.39.19a:

kārayettatpramāṇaṁ sarvathā nānyathācāret /

⁴ VAK.23, p.169:

*sarveṣvaṅgeṣu ekayavādiṣadyavāntaṁ hinādhikeyaṁ na doṣāya bhavati
tasmādyathocitaṁ yuktyā kārayet /*

⁵ KRA.20.171b-172:

*kimidaṁ parimāṇena kārāṇaṁ yacca vai viduḥ //
yavaṁ yavatrayaṁ vāpi ardhāṅgulamathāpi vā //
ekena vātha pādābhyāṁ nyūnādhikeye na doṣakṛt /*

⁶ Pādma (Kriyā).20.3b:

utsedhamānaṁ mūrdhādi pādāntamanupūrvaśah //

All the ten *tālas* extensively includes their three sub-grades i.e. *uttama*, *madhyama* and *kaniṣṭha*.

5.3.3. *Uttama daśa-tāla*

Uttama daśa-tāla, the highest in *tāla* system (124 *aṅgulas*) is mainly applicable to the icon of Viṣṇu wherever it is installed either in the main sanctum sanctorum or in other shrines in the temple precincts. The *dhruva-bera* and *kautuka-bera* must be in this *tāla* in general. However, this *tāla* is not prescribed for any female icons including Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī.

The following table consolidates the *uttama daśa-tāla* found in *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* and *śilpa* texts: (First digit is *aṅgula* and digit after dot (.) is *yava*)

VERTICAL MEASUREMENTS (MĀNA)	VAK SCS BCS	KJK	YAJ	PRA Pādma Bhargava	Māna	SKL KSS SR
Height of <i>uṣṇīṣa</i>	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.0	1	1.3
Bottom of <i>uṣṇīṣa</i> to <i>keśānta</i>	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Face			13.4	13.4	13.4	
a. Hair-line to (<i>akṣi-sūtra</i>)	4.3	4.3			4.4	4.3
b. Thence to nose-tip (<i>puṭānta</i>)	4.3	4.3			4.4	4.3
c. Thence to jaw-limit (<i>hanvanta</i>)	4.3	4.3			4.4	403
Fleshy fold below chin (<i>gala</i>)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Height of neck (<i>kaṇṭha</i>)	3.7	3.4	4.0	3.4	3.4	3.7
Hiccup (<i>hikkā</i>) to (<i>hṛdayānta</i>)	13.3	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.3
Thence to navel (<i>nābhyanta</i>)	13.3	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.3
Thence to root of (<i>medhṛa-mūla</i>)	13.3	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.4	13.3
Length of thigh (<i>ūru</i>)	26.5	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27
Height of knee (<i>jānu</i>)	4.3	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Length of foreleg (<i>jaṅghā</i>)	26.5	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0
Height of foot (<i>pāda</i>)	4.3	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Total <i>aṅgulas</i>	124	124	124	124	124	124

All the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* and *śilpa* works detail all six *mānas* (dimensions) of the icon fashioned in *uttama daśa-tāla* almost uniformly though with a deviation of *yavas* or 1/8 *aṅgula*. Among the *Vaikhānasa* treatises, *Vimānārcanākalpa* of Marīci is more extensive and other works to detail this *tāla* are *Kāśyapa Jñānakāṇḍa*, *Prakīrṇādhikāra* and *Yajñādhikāra*. On *Pāñcarātra* tradition, the details of iconometry are found in *Sātvata saṁhitā*, *Jayākhyā saṁhitā*, *Pādma saṁhitā*, *Bhārgava tantra* and *Śrīprasna saṁhitā* and so on.

5.3.4. *Madhyama daśa-tāla* (*Strī-māna* – Female icon)

Madhyama daśa-tāla (120 *aṅgulas*) is applicable for the female icons of Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī and some male divinities.¹ The following table presents the vertical measurement in this *tāla* applicable to female icons:-

VERTICAL MEASUREMENTS (MĀNA)	VAK YAJ	BCS	SCS SKL	KSS	Bhargava
Height of <i>uṣṇīṣa</i>				1.0	1.0
From bottom of <i>uṣṇīṣa</i> to end of front hair	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Face					13
a. From end of front hair to eye-line	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	
b. From <i>akṣi-sūtra</i> to nose-tip	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	
c. From nose-tip to jaw-limit	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	
Small fleshy fold below chin (<i>gala</i>)	-	-	-	-	
Height of neck	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
From hiccup-line (<i>hikkā</i>) to chest-limit	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.0
From chest-limit to navel	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.0
From navel to root of sex organ (<i>yonyanta</i>)	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.0	13.0

¹ VAK.23, p.169:

atha devyoh mānam – madhyamaṁ daśatālaṁ savimśatiśaṅgulaṁ trinataṁ dvibhujam samabhaṅgaṁ natamānaṁ caturaṅgulaṁ śrīdevyā dakṣiṇapādaṁ sthitaṁ vāmapādaṁ kuñcitaṁ dakṣiṇahastaṁ prasāritaṁ tadūrumūlāmbitaṁ vāmaṁ padmadharaṁ hemābhāṁ // mahidevyā vāmapādaṁ sthitaṁ dakṣiṇapādaṁ kuñcitaṁ dakṣiṇahastaṁ utpaladharaṁ vāmaṁ prasāritaṁ tadūrumūlāmbitaṁ śyāmābhāṁ kīrtādyābharaṇānvitam //

VERTICAL MEASUREMENTS (MĀNA)	VAK YAJ	BCS	SCS SKL	KSS	Bhargava
Length of thigh	26.0	26.0	26.0	26.0	26.0
Height of knee	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	
Length of foreleg	26.0	26.0	26.0	26.0	26.0
Height of foot	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	26.0
Total āṅgulas	120	120	120	120	120

Tāla system is meant for the proportionate measurement of the icon from the soul of the foot to *uṣṇiṣa* on the top. The height of the pedestal and *makuṭa* is not included here. In the *tāla* system, *uttama daśa-tāla* has four āṅgulas more than *madhyama daśa-tāla*. However, the icons of Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī do not have the height of the icon of Viṣṇu. Their icons (foot to head), may have the height equal to eye-level (*netrānta*), ear-level (*karṇānta*), hiccup-line (*hikkānta*) or breastnut (*stanānta*) of the icon of Viṣṇu.¹

In the study of the icons of Government Museum, Chennai, Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī consorting Viṣṇu (Accn. Nos.2 and 31) are in *madhyamā-daśa-tāla* measurement.

5.4. Comparative measurement of different types of icons

According to the prescriptions of *Vaikhānasa* tradition, the *kautuka-bera* should always be fashioned in *uttama daśa-tāla*. Two-fifth of the total height of the *dhruva-bera* is the best size (*uttama*) of *kautuka-bera*; two third of *uttama* size is of medium grade (*madhyama*); one third of *uttama* is of *adhama* grade.² The *utsava-bera* has the same measurement if the *dhruva-bera* is established in

¹ VAK.19, p.102:

devasya bāhumānaṁ stanāntaṁ vā devyormānaṁ /

Viṣvakṣena.10.88:

devasya bāhumūlāntaṁ devināmiti cocchrayam /

stanāntaṁ vā munīśreṣṭha cocchrayaṁ paripaṭhyate //

² KRA.6.16-17a:

dhruvabherāgnibhāge tu dvibhāgaṁ parigrhya ca /

taddvibhāgaṁ tridhā kṛtvā samstañcottamaṁ bhavet //

dvibhāgaṁ madhyamaṁ proktamekabhāgaṁ tathādhamaṁ /

ekabera mode.¹ *Bali-bera* should have the size of one *tāla* of the *dhruva-bera* i.e. the height of the face of *dhruva-bera*.² One third of the total height of *dhruva-bera* is the *uttama* measurement of *kautuka-bera*, *snapan-bera* and *utsava-bera*, as per Atri.³

Atri's calculation of the size of *kautuka-bera* is different. Total height of *dhruva-bera* is divided into nine equal parts. *Kautuka-bera* measuring five parts is *uttama*; it is *madhyama* if it measures four parts; and, it is *adhama* if it is of three parts. Finally, in the diminishing order, *kautuka-bera* measuring one part of nine division of *mūla-bera* is *adhamādhama*.⁴

According *Pādma saṁhitā*⁵ holds the view: *karmārcā* should have the height of one-tenth of the total height of *mūla-bera*. This icon may have the height of twelve, sixteen, eighteen or twenty-four *dehalabdhāṅgulas* (*aṅgulas* applicable to *dhruva-bera*) proportionately. On the other hand, *karmārcā* may have the height of twenty-four, eighteen, sixteen, twelve, eight, six or four

¹ KRA.6.18a:

ekaberaṁ dhruvaṁ cetsyāt tatsamaṁ cautsavaṁ matam /

² KRA.6.18b:

dhruvaberaṁ mukhotsedham baliberaṁ prakalpayet //

³ SAA.24.11b-12:

dhruvaberasya mānaṁ yat tribhāgaṁ kārayecca tat //
tasyaikaḥbhāgamānaṁ tu kautukaṁ cottamaṁ bhavet /
snapanam ca tathā bimbamutsavaṁ ca tathāiva ca //

⁴ SAA.24.14b-15, 18b-19a:

dhruvaberaṁ navāṁśaṁ tatkr̥tvaikāṁśaṁ vyapohya ca //
śeṣāṁśaṁ taṁ dvidhā kuryādekaḥbhāgena sammitam /
uttamaṁ madhyamaṁ caiva tatkaṭukamudāhṛtam //
dhruvaberaṁ navāṁśaṁ tatkr̥tvaikāṁśena kautukam //
adhamādhamaṁ yuktam yathāśaktyā tu kārayet /

⁵ *Pādma (Kriyā).19.4b-10a:*

dhruvaberasamucchrāye vibhakte daśadhā sati //
ekāṁśena pratikṛteḥ karmārcāyāḥ samucchrayaḥ /
dvādaśāṁśena yadvā syāt ṣoḍaśāṁśena vā bhavet //
yadvāṣṭādaśabhāgena caturviṁśāṁśameva vā /
mahāberāṅgulāpekṣā yadvā tasyāḥ samunnatiḥ //
caturviṁśāṅgulā yadvā bhavedaṣṭādaśāṅgulā /
ṣoḍaśāṅgulamānā vā yadvā syād dvādaśāṅgulā //
aṣṭāṅgulāthavā yadvā ṣaḍaṅgulasamucchrayaḥ /
caturāṅgukamānā vā yadvā mānāṅgulena tu /
pūrvoktāṅgulamānāni kartavyāni yathāruci /
balitīrthapratikṛtiḥ śayanotthānakautukam //
karmārcāsammitotsedhaḥ kathitaḥ kamalāsana /

mānāṅgulas (standard *āṅgula*). Other functional icons viz. *bali-bera*, *tīrtha-bera* and *śayana-bera*, should measure the same height of *kautuka-bera* (*karmārcā*). *utsava-bera* should have the height of one-third of the height of *dhruva-bera*.¹

Viṣvaksena saṁhitā presents another type of comparative measurement of the icons in the temple: *kautuka-bera* with the height of one-third, one-fourth and one-fifth of *mūlabera* is *uttama*, *madhyama* and *hīna* (*adhama*) respectively.² Alternatively, *kautuka-bera* may have the height of twenty-four, eighteen, sixteen, twelve and eight proportionate to *mūla-bera*.³ *utsava-bera* should have the height of half of the *mūla-bera* or one-third of the same. *Snapan-bera* must be with the height of one-fifth of the *mūla-bera* or it may be equal to *utsava-bera* in height.⁴ One-third of the height of the *utsava-bera* is the height of *bali-bera*.⁵ On the other hand, its height may be equal to *karmārcā*.⁶ Again, *bali-bera* measuring eleven and quarter *āṅgulas* proportionate to the digit of *anṅuṣṭha* of *mūlabera* is *uttama*; it is *madhyama* if the height is eleven *āṅgulas*; and, it is in *adhama* grade if it has the height of eight *āṅgulas*.⁷ *Tirthabimba* should be equal to *bali-bera*.⁸

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.19.14a:

utsavārcā trītyāṁśamutsedho'tahvā bhavet /

² *Viṣvaksena*.10.43-44a:

*mūlaberasya dīrghasya tribhāgaikaṁ tu kautukam /
vedabhāgaikabhāgaṁ vā bhūtabhāgaikabhāgikam //
śreṣṭhaṁ madhyamahīnaṁ tu trividhaṁ kautukam /*

³ *Viṣvaksena*.10.47b-48:

*triguṇāṣṭāṅgulotsedhaṁ athavāṣṭādaśāṅgulam //
ṣoḍaśāṅgulakaṁ vāpi dvādaśāṅgulameva vā /
athavāṣṭāṅgulotsedhaṁ balibimbamathocyate /*

⁴ *Viṣvaksena*.10.43a:

utsavapratimāyāmaṁ snapanārcāttu kārayet /

⁵ *Viṣvaksena*.10.45b:

tadguṇāṁśaikabhāgaṁ tu baliberocchrayaṁ bhavet //

⁶ *Viṣvaksena*.10.46a:

karmārcāyāḥ pramāṇaṁ vā kuryādvā lakṣaṇaṁ bhavet /

⁷ *Viṣvaksena*.10.49-50:

*pādādhikadaśaikaṁ tu anṅuṣṭhāṅgulinā mune /
baliṁ bimbochrayaṁ kṛtvā cottamaṁ parikīrtitam //
ekādaśāṅgulotsedhaṁ baliṁ madhyamakautukam /
aṣṭāṅgulaṁ vā kurvita balibimbādhamam bhavet //*

⁸ *Viṣvaksena*.10.51a:

tirthabimbaṁ tathaiva syāditi śāstrasya niścayaṁ /

CHAPTER VI

TAMIL ICONS OF GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, CHENNAI

The Government Museum, Chennai, has a high reputation for the vast collection of prestigious metal icons of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu themes. This Museum had an opportunity to get the icons from all the adjacent states where metal icons were in use comparable to northern belt of India. A number of temples dedicated to Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śakti and their sub-groups, had promoted the development of iconography in the South especially in Tamil Nadu where the temples are still alive with a number of metal icons housed therein under worship. This study focuses on the metal icons of Viṣṇu housed in this Museum. The metal icons of *Vaiṣṇava* theme in the Museum are innumerable and they are about 400 in number. The collection includes different forms of Viṣṇu – *sthānaka* (standing), *āsīna* (seated), *avatāras* (incarnations) of Viṣṇu such as Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, female divinities, attendant/subordinate deities like Sudarsana, Viṣvaksena and so on.

This thesis focuses on the study of fortytwo selected icons of Viṣṇu both in *sthānaka* (standing) and *āsīna* (seated) stances comprising both temple icons and domestic icons (*grhārcā*). Each icon, based on either *Pāñcarātra* or *Vaiṣṇava* tradition, has some unique features reflecting the principles of *Āgamic* traditions as well as non-*Āgamic* but regional variations.

The icons of Viṣṇu in this study are classified in the following manner:

	Standing icons of Viṣṇu
1	Viṣṇu with <i>Prayoga-cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>abhaya</i> and <i>gadā</i>
2	Viṣṇu with <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>padma</i> in <i>abhaya</i>
3	Viṣṇu with <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>gadā</i> and <i>padma</i> in <i>pallava-hasta</i>
4	Viṣṇu as Keśava with <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>cakra</i> , <i>padma</i> and <i>gadā</i>
5	Viṣṇu with <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>abhaya</i> and <i>gadā</i>

6	Viṣṇu with <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>abhaya</i> and <i>kaṭihasta/ūruhasta</i>
7	Viṣṇu with <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>abhaya</i> and <i>varada</i>
8	Viṣṇu with <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>varada</i> and <i>ūruhasta</i>
	Seated icons of Viṣṇu
9	Viṣṇu with <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , both <i>padma</i> and <i>gadā</i> in <i>pallava-hasta</i>
10	Viṣṇu with <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>padma</i> in <i>kaṭaka-hasta</i> and <i>gadā</i> in <i>pallava-hasta</i>
11	Viṣṇu with <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , both <i>padma</i> and <i>gadā</i> in <i>kaṭaka-hasta</i>
12	Viṣṇu with <i>cakra</i> , <i>śaṅkha</i> , <i>abhaya</i> and <i>simhakarṇa/āhūya-varada</i>
	Viṣṇu with Consorts
13	Standing Viṣṇu (four armed) with consorts
14	Seated Viṣṇu (two armed) with consorts

All icons are explained with illustrations. Many of these icons are generally put on display at the Museum one time or other as representative icons of different periods and areas in last sixty years. These icons cover the period from 8th century AD to 18th century AD. Hence, these icons have been taken up for a study along with *Āgamas*.

6.1. *Sthānaka* (standing) icons of Viṣṇu

Viṣṇu, Agaraohai, Thanjavur District, Accn. No.917/78

This beautiful icon of Viṣṇu in *samapādasthānaka* standing posture is unique with reference to the tall *kirīṭa* and *prayoga-cakra*. The pedestal has two major divisions viz., *upapīṭha* and *padmapīṭha*. The components of the square *upapīṭha* from bottom to top are: *upāna*, *kampa*, *padma*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and *mahāpaṭṭī*; the mildly elliptical *padmapīṭha* consists of the components from the bottom: *adhodaḷa*, *paṭṭikā* and *ūrdhvaḍaḷa* with support for the foot-plate serving as *karṇikā* unusually convex instead of flat. The *adhodala* has also prominent *upadala*.

This icon holds *prayoga-cakra* in the back right hand and *śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) in the back left hand, both hands in *kartarīmukha* in which the palm is turned sidewise. Even the stretched fingers i.e. *tarjanī* (index finger) and *madhyamā* (middle finger) are in a very natural way. The mid part of *cakra* (*ārakūṭa* or *nābhi*) is unusually very wide proportionate to the natural size of *śaṅkha*. The *cakra* has flames on four sides of the rim (*nemī*) and two



Fig.18. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.4

flames issue from the middle of the *cakra* (*nābhi*) on both sides. The *śaṅkha* has four flames, two on the sides, one on the top and one in the frontal side. The *śaṅkha* and *cakra* lean towards inside and they are supported by the extension of *skandhamālā*. The lower right hand is *abhaya-hasta*. The lower left hand with the upturned palm is placed near the upper part of the thigh like *ūruhasta* but slightly brought forward. The position of the hand and a small cavity on the foot plate confirms *gadā* in this hand.¹ The *gadā* is missing. The arms offshoot at *bāhumūla*. Three *ratnavalayas* adorn the *maṇibandha* and the crook of all the hands has one *vaḷayas*. *Keyūras* with beautiful *padma-purimas* are present just above the *kūrpara-valaya* on all four hands. All fingers except the middle finger (*madhyamā*) have the *aṅgulīya* (ring) in the second *parva* of the fingers.

The face is round with well-proportioned eyes, eyebrows, prominent nose and pronouncing lips. The *kiriṭa-makuṭa* measures one and half times of the face in height. *Ratnapaṭṭa* above *lalāṭapaṭṭa* is beautifully designed with small floral *purimas*. *Makara-purima* in the front of *kiriṭa* is very large both in height and width. Side *purimas* are small. *Mālā* in *torāṇa* fashion begins from the mouth of *makara*, runs above the side *purimas* and ends on the mouth of *makara* at the back side. *Abhiṣeka* (central part of *makuṭa*) is designed like *ratnakacita*. Pearl strings, broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) beautify the *abhiṣeka* on the top. *Karṇapuṣpa*, *karṇapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* with the string (*avataṁśa*) attached to both adorn the ears. The neck is proportionately slightly narrow. A *kañṭhī* (*upagrīva*), two rows of broad necklaces and one thin *hāra* adorn the chest. Prominent *Śrīvatsa* is present on the right chest. A thick three-stranded *yajñopavīta* has a broad fastening over the left breast where the *stanaśūtra* and *urassūtra* (*pralambasūtra*) bifurcate. The *yajñopavīta* extends up to *kaṭisūtra* level. The wide *udarabandha* with a small decorated medallion is naturally fixed at the *hrdayāvadhi* level. *Pitāmbara*

¹ According to *Pādma saṁhitā* (*Kriyā*. 20.81b-82a), while holding *gadā*; the hand should be 2 *aṅgulas* away from the hip of the icon. According to *Nāradya Saṁhitā* (13.182b-183a), the palm of the hand holding *gadā* must be to the level of *kaṭisūtra*. In the absence of *gadā* the hand remains touching the hip or it may be *kaṭyālabhāna*.

is fashioned like *hastisūṇḍikā* and has horizontal lines. The *uttariya* is wound with sashes falling beautifully at the sides. A broad *kaṭibandha* with unusually large *kṛtrimavaktra* (lion-face) adorn the waist with *ūrudāma*. Extension of cloth/ spiral- like string is present above the ankle only on the right leg. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

While looking at the back, what is fascinating is the beautiful *makarakūṭa* of *makuṭa*. The ringlets of hair are radially arranged proportionately and in consonance with the *hāra* at the backside of the neck. The *śirascakra* is beautifully placed behind at the *akṣisūtra* level the *kirīṭa* with festoons issuing from the wide central knob with lotus like spokes. One of the unique features of this icon is: the

yajñasūtra, the *stanaśūtra* and *urassūtra* bifurcate from the knot also at the backside. *Kacca* of *pītāmbara* is placed exactly at the place where it is supposed to be. The sashes of the *uttariya* is beautifully knotted and placed on the sides of the hip.

What is noteworthy in this icon is the absence of *prabhāśanku* and two holes in the *kaṇṭha* part of *upapīṭha* for processional purpose though this is created with high level carvings of ornamentation and with the attributes with beautiful flames and other details. From the stylistic features, this *mūrti* can be placed in the 12th-13th Century AD.



**Fig.19. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.917/78
back view**

Viṣṇu, Locality unknown, Accn. No.4

This icon of Viṣṇu in *samapādashānaka* standing posture is one of the master pieces to present the exact theme of *Pāñcarātra* Āgama in spite of the size of the icon to be not more than half foot. It is observed iconographically as “careful moulding and exquisite finish combine with decorative detail to make this little icon one the gems of the collection”.¹ The pedestal has two major divisions viz., *upapīṭha* and *padmapīṭha*. The components of the rectangular *upapīṭha* from bottom to top are: *upana*, *kampa*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kañṭha*, *kampa*, *padma* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. The *padmapīṭha* is round and it consists of *adhodala*, *paṭṭikā* and *ūrdhvadala* with concave *karīṅkā* as foot-plate. The *jaṭibandhana* is very close and intact. *Prabhāsaṅku* (props) or *prabhā-suśira* (socket) are absent.

The face is round in shape. The *kirīṭa* measuring almost same to the height of the face indicates its affinity to the early phase. *Ratnapaṭṭa* above



Fig.20. Viṣṇu, Accn. No. 4

¹ F.H. Gravely and T.N. Ramachandran, *The catalogue of Hindu Metal Icons of Government Museum, Madras*, p.

lalāṭapaṭṭa is corroded. *Makara-purima* in the front of *kirīta* is very large. Side *purimas* are small. Details of *purima* on *abhiṣeka* are not traceable. Pearl strings, broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) are present above *abhiṣeka*. Simple *karnapuṣpa*, *karnapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears. The facial features especially the places around the lips are very natural and they complement the benign nature (*saumya*) of the divine form.

The upper tip of the *kartarimukha* of the back hands at the level of just below the *hikkā-sūtra* keeps the upper part of the flames of the *śaṅkha* and *cakra* to the level of *netrasūtra*. The *prayoga-cakra* on the right side has four flames at the sides of the rim and two flames on both sides of *nābhi* of *cakra*. *Śaṅkha* on left side has six flames, one on the top, one at the bottom, two on the sides and two flames in front and back side. The lower right hand has *abhaya-mudrā* but the fingers above the *stana-sūtra*, holding a *padma* with stem between *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī*.¹ The lower left hand with upturned palm is projected forward and is placed on the top of the *gadā* with its bulbous end placed on the *karnikā* (foot-plate) of the *padmapīṭha*. The index finger and the little finger of this hand slightly raised up indicate the holding of *gadā* at ease (*lāghava*). One-third of lower portion of *gadā* is created as bulbous with the handle of the *gadā* with three rings. The arms bifurcate at *bāhumūla*. All hands have one *valaya* at the wrist, one *valaya* above *kūrpara* and *keyūras*.

A *kañṭhī* and a simple *hāra* adorn the chest. The traces of Śrīvatsa in triangular form are noticeable on the right chest. The *yajñasūtra*, unusually without knot, bifurcates exactly in the middle of the chest just below the breast as *stana-sūtra*, *yajñasūtra* and *urassūtra* (*pralambasūtra*) which goes inside the *kaṭibandha*. A thin *udarabandha* at the *hrdayāvadhi* level, depression at *nābhi* and slight projection of the stomach below *nābhi* are very emphatic.

¹ As per *Pādma saṁhitā* (*Kriyā*, 20.77-78), the tip of the middle finger must be to the level of *stana-sūtra* with the distance of twelve *aṅgulas* from the breast-nut (*stana-cūcuka*). A lotus stem should be present between the *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī*.

Pitāmbara is so nicely worked that shows the limbs delicately through. The lower part of the girdle, instead of forming the conventional median loop, extends right across both the thighs and does not even hang very low. The *kaṭibandha* is wide but without *simha-mukha* clasp. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

The back view of the icon is important to notice some unique features. The *śiraścakra* with little ornamental is placed exactly at the back and issuing a festoon from its central loop. It has lotus petal-like spokes almost resembling the spokes (*ara*) of the *cakra*. The tresses of hair are radially arranged. The backside of *hāra* and *pralamba-sūtra* is not shown. The *kaṭṭa* at the back is shown in inverted manner comparable to other icons.

From the size of the icon, one can consider this to be a *kautuka-bera* or *grhārcābera*. As the size of the icon is above six *aṅgulas*, as per *Nāradya saṁhita*,¹ there is no



**Fig.21. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.4,
back view**

¹ As per *Nāradya saṁhita* (13.348-349), the height of the *karmārcā* (*kautuka-bera*) must not be less than six *mānāṅgulas* (standard *aṅgulas*) and not more than twelve *mānāṅgulas*. On the

problem of taking this to be a *kautuka-bera* provided the *mūlabera* of the shrine to be ten times the height of the *kautuka-bera*. The absence of *prabhāśaṅku* may pose a problem but it is optional. However, the corrosion on the forehead where *tilaka* made of *kastūri* has left the deep impression is very indicative of high a level usage which is possible only in the temple. Therefore, this icon may be taken as *kautuka-bera* (*nityostva-bera*) as well as *snāna-bera* having daily ritualistic bath in the Viṣṇu temples.

Evidently, the *prayoga-cakra*, the flames of *śaṅkha* and *cakra* leaning towards the shoulder, the proportionate size of the *kirīṭa*, simple ornamentation and the components of *upapīṭha* and the *padma* in the lower right hand all combine to suggest an early date, undoubtedly not later than 9th Century AD.

other hand, its height must be one tenth of the height of the *mūla-bera* (*dhruva-bera*) i.e, one *tāla* of the latter.

Viṣṇu, Locality Unknown. Accn. No.3

This icon of Viṣṇu in *samapāda-sthānaka* style is one of the earliest specimens of *Pāñcarātra* theme. The missing pedestal and the foot-plate confirm the following of *jaṭibandhana* procedure as per the injunctions of the *āgamas*.

The face is little ovoid and the treatment of eyes and other facial features indicate the benign nature. The *kirīṭa-makuṭa* measures one and half times of the face in height. A broad *ratnapaṭṭa* is beautifully designed with a small floral *purima* in the front. *Makara-purima* in the front of *kirīṭa* is very large. Side *purimas* are small. *Mālā* in *torāṇa* fashion begin from the mouth of *makara*, runs above the side *purimas* and ends on the mouth of *makara* at the back side. The details of *abhiṣeka* are corroded. At the back side of *kirīṭa*, the horizontal rings below the upper *ratnapaṭṭa* give the appearance of *karaṇḍa* but the size and the



Fig. 22. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.3

structure of *kirīṭa* do not permit to consider this to be *karaṇḍa-makuṭa*. Broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) beautify the *abhiṣeka* on the top. *Karṇapūra* and large *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears of which the earlobes

(*karnapāśa*) are turned sidewise suggesting the movement of *makara-kunḍalas* as moving *makara-kunḍalas* in the religious Tamil hymns (*Divyaprabandham*)¹ of *Vaiṣṇava* saints (*Ālvārs*) who were the root cause of spreading of *Vaiṣṇava Bhakti* Movement of Tamil Country.

The upper tips of the *kartarimukha* of the upper hands are at the level of just below the *hikkā-sūtra* with the palm turned towards the onlooker. The tip of the upper flame of the *śaṅkha* and *cakra* are to the level of just below *netrasūtra*. The unique feature here is the *cakra* and *śaṅkha* are not on the tip of the *kartarimukha* but inserted between the two stretched fingers.² The *prayoga-cakra* on the right side has three flames, one on the top and one on both sides of *nābhi* of *cakra*. *Śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) on left side has three flames, one on the top and two on the sides.

The lower right hand has *abhaya-mudrā* but slightly leaning outwards with the tip of the fingers just above the *stana-sūtra* holding a *padma* with stem between *anṅuṣṭha* and *tarjanī*.³ The lower left hand with upturned palm is slightly projected forward and is placed on the top of the *gadā* with its mildly bulbous end placed on the projected part of foot-plate supposed to be the *kariṅkā* of the *padmapīṭha* which is missing. The index finger and the little finger of this hand are slightly raised up indicating *gadā* held at ease (*lāghava*). The one third of lower portion of *gadā* is created as slightly bulbous with the handle diminishing in size towards the top which confirms to follow the rule of the *Āgamic* principles.⁴ The *gadā* has one wide ring in the middle of the

¹ *Tiruvāymoli* of Nammālvār. 8.8.1

² *Pādma saṁhitā* (*Kriyā*.20.82, 84 and 89) and *Nāradya saṁhitā* (13.179-180a) describe position of the *śaṅkha* and *cakra* on the upper hands in *kartarimukha* in which *tarjanī* (index finger) and *madhyamā* (middle finger) combined together hold the *śaṅkha* and *cakra*. These texts do not mention the tip of the stretched fingers. Therefore, the sculptor of this icon could have created *śaṅkha* and *cakra* as inserted between the fingers rather on the tip of *kartarimukha*.

³ As per *Pādma saṁhitā* (*Kriyā*.20.77-78), the tip of the middle finger must be to the level of *stana-sūtra* with the distance of 12 *aṅgulas* from the breast-nut (*Stana-cūcuka*). A lotus stem should be present between the *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī*.

⁴ According to *Pādma saṁhitā* (*Kriyā*. 20.80-81a), the *gadā* must be of four *tāla* in the length. The broader portion should be at the bottom and the thin portion should be at the top and must be held in the upturned palm of the lower left hand. The broader portion has to be 3 *aṅgulas* and thinner portion is one *aṅgula* and *madhyama* should be 2.5 *aṅgulas*.

bulbous part and one both at top and bottom of the same. The handle has four rings. The arms bifurcate at *bāhumūla*. All hands have three broad *valayas* at the wrist. The *keyūras* of the upper part of the front hands have large *makarakūṭa* which remains from *kakṣasūtra* up to *kūrpara*. The *aṅguliya*s are present on all the fingers. The *keyūras* of the back hands are turned sidewise.

The neck with three *valayas* (*kambugrīva*) is adorned with *kañṭhī* (*upagrīva*). *Hāra* and *kaustubha-hāra* with five beaded pendants are present on the chest where Śrīvatsa is not traceable due to corrosion.

The *yajñopavīta* is unusually four stranded and appears to be made of pearl (*muktā-yajñopavīta*). A broad fastening of *yajñopavīta* is seen above the *kakṣasūtra* level where the *pralambasūtra* bifurcates and remains as an individual one both in the front side as well as the back side. What is noteworthy is the absence of *stanaśūtra* which is common in the icons of 7th - 8th Centuries AD. *Udarabandha* with central medallion is present just above the naval instead of at the level of the *hṛdayāvadhisūtra*.

The *pitāmbara* is depicted in a refined manner. The folds are suggested by single thick lines curving upwards. The *kaṭisūtra* is shown as pearl string. The *kaṭibandha* has a knot with a beautiful loop on either side. The broad median loop of the *uttariya* has cast off the semi-circular form. The *ūrudāma* is longer. There are only two bands of the sash going through the waist. *Bhujāṅgavalaya/pādapatra*, an important ornament of the shank (*jaṅghā*) is present only on the right leg. *Pādavaḷaya/pādasaras/ pādajāla* is absent in this icon.

The backside of this icon exhibits some unique features. The *śīrascakra* is not circular but the spokes (*ara*) are arranged radially with central festoons as if twisted which is generally known as '*koṇṭaiippū*' in the Northern Tamil country. The tresses are also shown in the twisted style as in the *śīrascakra*. The *pralambasūtra* and *yajñopavīta* are shown separately. The stripes on the *pitāmbara* and the beautiful modelling of this metal icon are noteworthy.

The position of the *prayoga-cakra* without flames on the rims except the top is similar to the stone relief icons of Viṣṇu and Harihara in *Ādivarāha* rock cut (*Pārameśvara Mahāvarāha Viṣṇugrha*), *Varāha* Rock-cut both at Mahābalipuram, Ranganātha cave temple at Namakkal and Viṣṇu painting in Kailāsanātha temple at Kanchipuram. The *stanaśūtra* is absent in the aforementioned icons as well as those found at southern Tamil country. The division of *pralambasūtra* and its position in both sides can be noticed in the above places. Considering these facts, the present icon is fit to be dated to the 8th Century AD.



Fig.23. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.3, back view

Viṣṇu, Siddhavazhuvur, Thanjavur District, Accn. No. 625/68

The icon of Viṣṇu in *samapādashānaka* standing posture is one of the earliest icons adhering to the prescriptions of *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* though this is much corroded probably due to high usages in the temple as *kautuka-bera* or *snāna-bera*. The round foot-plate indicates the possibility of the circular *padmapīṭha* which is not available.

The benign face is little oval with double chin. The conical *kirīṭa-makuṭa* has the height of the face. Broad *ratnapaṭṭa* above *lalāṭa* is beautifully designed. *Makara-purima* in the front of *kirīṭa* is large. Side *purimas* are small. Other details of *kirīṭa* are corroded. *Abhiṣeka* (central part of *makuṭa*) is designed like *ratnakacita*. Pearl strings, broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) beautify the *abhiṣeka* on the top. The *makara-kunḍalas* are prominent though corroded.



Fig.24. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.625/68

The upper tips of the *kartarīmukha* of the upper hands turned sidewise, are at the level of the *hikkā-sūtra* leaning towards inside. The tip of the upper flame of the *śaṅkha* and *cakra* are to the level of *bhrūsūtra*. The unique feature

here is the *cakra* and *śaṅkha* are not on the tip of the *kartarimukha* but inserted between the two stretched fingers. The *prayoga-cakra* on the right side has five flames, one on the top, two on sides of the rim and one on both sides of *nābhi* of *cakra*. *Śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) on left side has five flames, one on the top, two on the sides, one in front and one at the back. The lower right hand with *abhaya-mudrā* is slightly away more than the prescribed distance¹ probably, because the back hands are also away from the body with the tip of the fingers at the level of *stanaśūtra*, holding a *padma* with stem between *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī*.² The lower left hand with upturned palm, with the index finger and the little finger of this hand slightly raised, is slightly projected forward and is placed on the top of *gadā* with its mildly bulbous end placed on the foot-plate. The lower portion of *gadā* slightly bulbous with the conical end resting on the foot-plate has a long handle with four rings. The arms bifurcate at *bāhumūla*. All hands have three *valayas* at the wrist. The *keyūras* on the upper part (*bāhu*) of the front hands have large *makarakūṭa* which remains from *kakṣasūtra* up to *kūrpara*. The *aṅguliyas* are traceable on all the fingers. The traces of *keyūras* of the back hands are noticeable.

Skandhamālā, *kañṭhī* and a broad *hāra* are present. The strip-like *yajñopavīta* has a broad fastening above the *kakṣasūtra* on the left where the *stanaśūtra* bifurcates. *Pralambasūtra* is not traceable. A wide *udarabandha* is well placed above the *nābhi*.

The *kaṭi-vastra* is well knotted forming a central loop below his naval. *Kaṭibandha*, *katisūtra* and *ūrudāma* are noticeable but the details are corroded. The *pītāmbara* is fashioned like *hastisūṇḍikā* and the sashes are seen on both the sides. *Bhujāṅgavalaya/pādapatra*, an ornament is seen only on the shank (*jaṅghā*) of the right leg. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet of the icon.

¹ According to *Vimānārcanākalpa* (*Paṭala* 22, p.160), the tip of the middle finger of *abhaya-hasta* must be at the level of breast-nut of the icon at the distance of thirteen *aṅgulas* but it is twelve *aṅgulas*, as per *Pādma saṁhitā* (*Kriyā*.20.77-78). Vide. Details in terminology.

² As per *Pādma saṁhitā* (*Kriyā*. 20.77-78), the tip of the middle finger must be to the level of *stanaśūtra* with the distance of 12 *aṅgulas* from the breast-nut (*stana-cūcuka*). A lotus stem should be present between the *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī*.

Looking at the back of Viṣṇu, the *kirīṭa* is well proportioned and it is little high with a top knob. The *śirascakra* is placed at the back of the *kirīṭa* with a tassel from its central portion. The hair locks are shown in ringlets and are placed at the back of nap of the neck in an ornamental way. The shoulders and chest are shown as powerful and his lower abdomen is slender. The *pitāmbara* with back *kacca* has horizontal lines. On the basis of stylistic features, this *mūrti* can be dated to the 9th Century AD.



**Fig.25. Viṣṇu, Accn. No. 625/68,
back view**

Viṣṇu, Locality unknown, Accn. No. 6

This icon of Viṣṇu depicted in *samapāda-sthānaka* standing stance, datable to 13th-14th Century AD, is noteworthy for the details in spite of its size less than six inches. The *pīṭha* has two sections viz., square *upapīṭha* and circular *padmapīṭha*. *Upapīṭha* consists of *upāna*, *padma*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kañṭha* (with *pāda* design), *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭi*. The circular *padmapīṭha* comprises of *adhodala*, *ūrdhavadala* and *karṇikā* supporting the foot plate of the icon.

The face is slightly oval with beautiful facial features but *cubuka* region is narrower. The slightly conical *kirīṭa-makuṭa* measures one and half times of the face in height. *Ratnapaṭṭa* above *lalāṭa-paṭṭa* is thin supporting *makara-purima* in the front of *kirīṭa*. *Mālā* in *toraṇa* fashion begins from the mouth of *makara*, runs above the side *purimas* and ends on the mouth of *makara* at the back side but the details are slightly corroded. *Abhiṣeka* (central part of *makuṭa*) is designed like *ratnakacita*. Pearl



Fig.26. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.6

strings, broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) beautify the *abhiṣeka* on the top. Large *karnapuṣpa*, *karnapūra* and *kuṇḍalas* resembling the shape of *makra* adorn the ears.

In this four-armed icon of Viṣṇu, the upper hands hold *kartarīmukha*. The stretched fingers of right hand are broken above the first *parva* (digit) hence, *cakra* is not traceable. The tip of the stretched finger of the *kartarīmukha* remains very much below the level of *hikkā-sūtra*. The upper left hand, very much leaning to the shoulder, holds *śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) with its tip of upper flame remaining at the level of *bhrū-sūtra*. *Śaṅkha* has four flames, one on the top, two on the sides and one at the bottom which is turned inside. The lower right hand is broken at the wrist. However, the position indicates *abhaya-mudrā* with the tip of the middle finger below *stana-sūtra*. The lower left hand is *kaṭyavalambita*. The position of the upturned palm brought little forward and a small socket on the foot plate suggest possibility of *gadā* in the hand. *Skandhamālā* with its upper part resembling the course of *makara-kuṇḍala*, *bāhumālā* on the left shoulder, *kakṣamālā* on the right shoulder, *keyūra* above the crook, *aṅgada* at the crook, one *ratna-valaya* at the wrist adorn the hands.

Kaṇṭhī, *graiveyaka* and *hāra* are shown like simple strings. Śrīvatsa in triangular form also adorn the upper torso. *Yajñopavīta* has the fastening on the left chest. *Stana-sūtra* below the breast level, *yajñasūtra* extending upto *kaṭibandha* and *urassūtra/pralambasūtra* running inside *kaṭibandha* are shown in the form of simple threads. *Udarabandha* has three bands only on the front side.

The *pītāmbara* is designed in *hastisuṇḍikā* fashion with thick ends (*ambarānta*). *Kaṭibandha* is beautifully designed with central medallion in floral design. The semi-circular loop of *uttariya* in the front, *ūrudāma* and sashes of *uttariya* on the sides add beauty to *pītāmbara*. The portion of the icon at the level of the upper thigh is wide generally shown in the female icons.

Pādapatra (*bhujaṅgavalaya*) in the form of coils is noticeable on the left leg above the ankle. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

At the back side of this icon, *śiraścakra* is beautifully placed at the bottom of *kirīṭa*. It is fashioned with multi-spokes and a broad central knob with tassels. The ringlets of hair are arranged radially at the back of the nap of the neck within the limit of *kaṇṭhī* and other two *hāras*. The *kacca* is clearly shown above *uttariya* and below *kaṭibandha*.

The head slightly leans on the right side. All embellishments are shown simply without much ornamentation, plausibly due to the size of the icon. Based on the size of the icon and absence of ring or hole on the pedestal for processional reason, this icon can be taken as *snapanā-bera*, *tīrtha-bera* or *grhārcā* (domestic icon).



Fig.27. Viṣṇu, Accn. No. 6, back view

Viṣṇu, Palani, Dindugul District, Accn. No. 94-5/48

This standing icon of Viṣṇu in *samapādastānaka* is noteworthy for its unique features. The pedestal has two major divisions viz., *upapīṭha* and *padmapīṭha*. The rectangular *upapīṭha* is a typical *vedikāsana* with *upāna*, *kaṇṭha* and *ūrdhva-paṭṭikā*. There are two props (*prabhāsaṅku*), unusually larger, on *upapīṭha* to hold *prabhāvali*. *Padmapīṭha* is in circular form consisting of two components *adhodala* and *ūrdhvadala*.

The round face with bulging nose, obviously unusual with reference to iconometry, and other facial features of *Chera* idiom, is decorated with a beautiful *kirīṭa-makuṭa*, which is noteworthy for its decorative components. The base of *kirīṭa* with *ratnapaṭṭa* beneath exactly fits to the head at *keśānta*.



Fig.28, Viṣṇu, Accn. No.94-5/48

The front side of *ratnapaṭṭa* is decorated with *patrapurima*. The middle part of *kirīṭa* (*abhiṣeka*) is plain with simple four-petaled *puṣpapurima* on all sides with *puṣpamāla-toraṇa* design. The upper part of *kirīṭa* has typical components: *ratnapaṭṭa* with *puṣpapurima*, *mahāpadma*, *kumuda* and *stūpi* (*mukula*/bud) from bottom. *Makara-kunḍalas* are very prominent adorning the ears as if

competing with wave-like tresses of hair which are spread on the sides like *vikīrṇa-jaṭā*. The tresses of hairs fall also on the shoulders and *vakṣasthala*.

Of the four hands offshooting from the crook, the upper hands have *kartarīmukha*-like gesture facing upwards. The *śaṅkha* and *cakra* rest on the palm supported by the index finger at the back from where a triband (*tri-yaṣṭī*) arch-like semi-circular frame emerges extending to the level of *mahāpadma* of *kirīṭa*. Semi-profile *cakra* has five flames, one on the top, two on the sides and two from the *nābhi* of *cakra* on both sides. *Śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) has typical crowning ornament but no flame if found.

The lower right hand with *pallava-mudrā* holds in the palm a full blown *padma* with its *karṇikā* forming like a bud at *hṛdayāvadhi* level. The lower left hand as *ūruhasta* holds the handle of *gadā* in an unusual manner in which all the five unproportionate fingers cling to the upper part of the thigh. *Keyūras* are absent above the elbow. However, *keyūra*-like ornaments are present at the wrist of the lower hands and the same in the upper hands in inverted style.

A broad *kañṭhī* and *hāra* with *kaustubha* pendant adorn the neck and chest respectively besides tresses of hair on *vakṣasthala*. *Udarabandha* with the knot is present on the upper part of unusual big stomach.¹ The *yajñopavīta* (without knot) is thick and a thread goes behind. There is no *stanaśūtra* or *pralambasūtra*.

The *pītāmbara*, which is very below the navel almost at the lower end of the belly, is beautifully worked with flower designs. *Uttariya* extends up to the *pādapiṭha* with sashes are worked at the end. *Pāda-valayas* adorn the ankle of the feet.

¹ This type of stomach known as *lambodara* is applicable to the icons below seven tāla like Vakratuṇḍa, Child Kṛṣṇa and the beings known as bhūtas.

At the backside, where a semi-circular arch is plain but it is shown as triband (*tri-yaṣṭika*) at the front. The *kirīṭa* is plain at the back. A beautiful and small *śiraścakra* with long radially arranged tresses from top of the ear to top of the ear reminds one to think of *vikīrṇa-jaṭā*. The bow at the back of his *kaṭi-vastra* is beautiful but the garment is plain. Undoubtedly, this standing icon of Viṣṇu is a creation of *Pāñcarātra* theme as far as the attributes are concerned. The tresses of hair and pot-belly may be of the regional variation. As the *prabhāsaṅku* confirms the position of the *prabhāvalī* on the pedestal, the semi-circular arch resting on the upper hands remain unsolved, because the *āgamic* texts have prescription of the *prabhāvalī* only on the pedestal. This icon of standing Viṣṇu is datable to circa 14th Century AD.



**Fig.29. Viṣṇu, Accn. No. 94-5/48
back view**

**Viṣṇu, Elumagalur, Mayiladuturai Taluk, Nagapattinam District.
Accn. No. 254/53**

The early Viṣṇu icons of Kerala at *Atiennur*, *Kazhakuttam* and *Eramam*, etc. are the best specimens following the strict injunctions of *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* and *śilpa-sāstra*. The icons datable prior to 10th Century AD prove also that the regional variations are less followed but the iconometrical and iconographical features remain unchanged. As such, the present icon of Viṣṇu stands as witness for the concept of icon-making, following the local traditions and practice without changing the theme of the icon.

This icon of Viṣṇu is in *samapāda-sthānaka* standing stance on the pedestal with two major divisions. The lower part viz., rectangular *upapīṭha* consists of components from bottom to top: *upāna*, *kampa*, *padma*, *kampa*,

kañṭha, *kampa* and proportionately very much projected *mahāpaṭṭī*; in addition, the *upapīṭha* has on the top *kampa* and angular *paṭṭikā* for the insertion of the *padmapīṭha* through *jaṭibandhana*. The *padma* moulding here is beautifully shown with *upadala*. The *kañṭha* has *pādavarga* design with criss-cross lines with dots inside each square reminding one *ratnapaṭṭikā* type. The elliptical



Fig.30. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.254/53

padmapīṭha has components: *upāna*, *kampa*, thin *kumuda*, *adhodala*, *paṭṭikā* and *ūrdhavadala*. The petals (*dala*) in both *ūrdhavadala* and *adhodala* are beautifully carved with prominent *upadala*. Instead of providing *prabhāsaṅku*, the lower portion of *prabhāvali* i.e. *pāda-varga* (leg/pāda) itself is attached on the foot-plate (*karṇikā*).

The facial features and the *kirīṭa-makuṭa* of this icon are noteworthy. With reference to iconometrical rules, the face is bigger and wider. The nose is aquiline, but the *nāsāpuṭa* (nose-wings) and *nāsāgra* (tip of the nose) are supposed to be equal by which *gojī* (space between the lower part of nose and the upper lip) in this icon is very broad. The slightly raised eye-brows (*bhrūlatā*) and the line formed on the forehead, the wide-open eyes, *kanīnikā* (eye-ball) carved as if looking down (*adhodrṣṭi*) and the hair-locks shown on the upper part of the ears resembling *jvālākeśa* (flaming hair) gives a little fierce appearance rather benign (*saumya*) attitude. The base of *kirīṭa-makuṭa* exactly fits to the head at *keśānta*. *Ratnapaṭṭa* at the base of *kirīṭa* has *patrapurima* in the front side. A string of beads beneath the *ratnapaṭṭa* extending between the two ears like an arch is noteworthy.¹ *Abhiṣeka* (middle part of *kirīṭa*) is plain with simple *puṣpapurima* on all sides. The upper part of *kirīṭa* has typical components: *paṭṭikā*, *ratnapaṭṭikā*, *paṭṭikā*, *kapota* designed with *kṣudranāsikā*, *mahāpadma*, *kampa*, banded *kumuda* and *mukula* in the shape of lotus-bud with four petals prominently appearing on the sides. A circular ring is attached almost at the back part of the *kirīṭa* with its height up to *mahāpadma* and its width equal to *karṇānta*. The base of the ring is attached to the base of the *kirīṭa*. The ring has three circles (rings), the middle one has *ratnapaṭṭa* design and other two are plain. Thin plate within the rim of the ring is attached to the crown.

The hair-locks appearing like *jvālākeśa* are present near the upper part of the ear. Prominent *makara-kunḍalas* adorn proportionately larger

¹ In the icons of south Tamil Country, the strings of pearls are shown above the forehead but attached to the base of *ratnapaṭṭa*. Vide. Accn. No.7, 9 etc.

karnapāśa. A three-stringed *kañṭhī* with *kaustubha* pendant is seen. *Bāhumūlā* with the design of *hāra* and *kakṣamālā* with the design of lotus stem with bud adorn the shoulders and the chest respectively. Three-stranded *yajnasūtra* is present with a broad fastening at the *hṛdayāvadhi* level from where the *pralambasūtra* offshoots, goes up, bends down and goes down within the garments and inside of *pādavalaya* and extended till the ankle of the left foot. *Udarabandha* is present in the upper part of bulging belly above the naval.

Of the four hands, the upper hands with the *kartarimukha* facing upwards hold *cakra* and *śaṅkha* on right and left sides respectively. The stem attached to the lower part of *cakra* and elongated lower part of *śaṅkha* remains between *tarjanī* and *madhyamā*. The *cakra* has four flames, one on the top, two on the sides and one from the *nābhi* in front side. *Śaṅkha* has four flames, one on the top, two on the sides and one in the front. The lower right hand, with its elbow at *madhya* level and the *pallava-hasta* raised to the level of *hṛdayāvadhi*, holds a partly-blossomed lotus. The lower left hand rests on the handle of *gadā* of which the bulbous end is placed on the foot-plate. *Keyūras* at the middle part of upper arm (*bāhumadhyā*), *valayas* at the crooks and middle of fore-arm (*prakoṣṭha-madhyā*) of the front hands and *ratnavalayas* at the wrists are a little wide and they have small medallion in front.

Pitāmbara is highly decorative with *kaṭibandha* with a central medallion and the *uttariya* forming semi-circular loop in front with floral designs. Two *pādavalayas* and a long *pādasaras* adorn the feet which are kept very closer almost touching each other.

The back side view of the upper part of the icon tends one to think of the manes (*saṭā*) of the icon of Narasimha. The hair appears from the base of *kirīṭa* as if combed, and, the coiled ends are arranged from shoulder to shoulder evenly rather radially. A small *śiraścakra* with its knob is present at the level of back of the mouth. Normally, this type of hair style with *śiraścakra* in such fashion is very unique.

The lower part of *prabhāvalī*, extending to the level of *meḍhra-sūtra* of the icon has props (*śaṅku*) for the insertion of upper portion of *prabhāvalī*. It has the components generally found on the *pādavarga* (pillar/pilaster) from the bottom: *yaṣṭi*, *padma*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa*, *vṛtta-kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kumbha* and *ūrdhvapadma*. The upper part of elliptical *prabhāvalī* emerges from the mouth of *makara* which is the base here. It has nine flames on the outer side of the ring and floral designs in the middle. It has rings on the backside for the insertion of the props (*śaṅku*).

Undoubtedly, this icon of standing Viṣṇu is Vāsudeva, the Primordial One, and it fits to the principles of *Pāñcarātra* iconography. The *kiriṭa-makuṭa* is the

characteristic of the art of *Kerala* of the 17th–18th Centuries AD. However, the aquiline nose and the hair style indicate that the sculptor had amalgamated the theme of *Pāñcarātra* and iconographic variation of the locality which is normally permissible in the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*. This icon of Viṣṇu is datable to 17th – 18th Century AD.



**Fig.31. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.254/53
back view**

Viṣṇu, Paruttiyur, Nannilam Taluk, Thanjavur District, Accn. No.879/78

This is an icon of standing Viṣṇu in *samapādestānaka* is depicted on a pedestal consisting of two major components viz., *upapīṭha* and *padmapīṭha*. The rectangular *upapīṭha* has the components from bottom to top: *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda* (projected outside the *jagatī*), *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and *padmavājana*.¹ The *padmapīṭha* consist of *kampa*, *adhodala* and *ūrdhvala*. The *ūrdhvala* is noteworthy in this icon. Generally, the tip of the petals of *ūrdhvala* remains outwards like *adhodala*. Here, all the petals of *ūrdhvala* are turned towards inside like un-open/partly open petals.

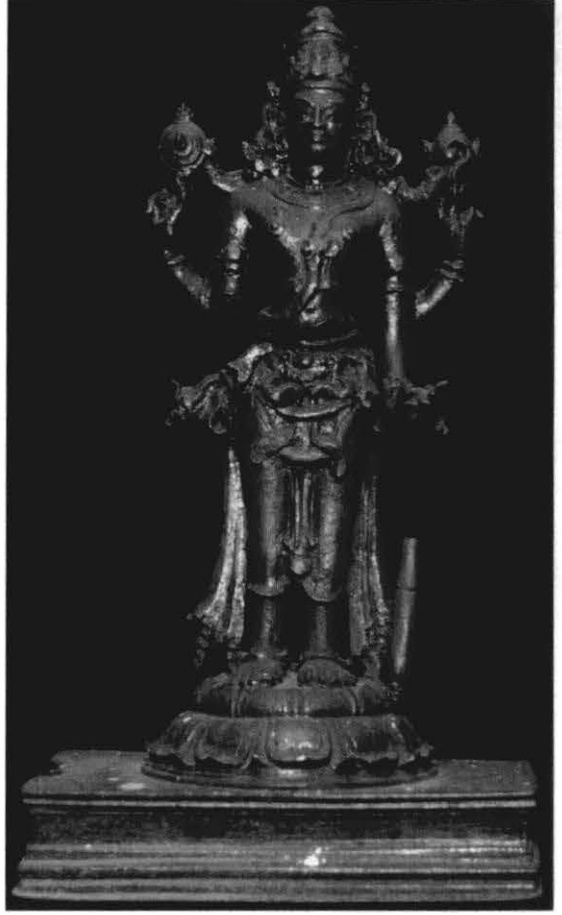


Fig.32. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.879/78

The round face with slightly bulging nose, with prominent eyebrows, eyes and lips and other facial features of *Chera* idiom, is adorned with a medium size *kirita*-*makuṭa*, which is noteworthy for its decorative components. The base of *kirita*, with prominent *ratnapatta* above, exactly fits to the head at *keśānta*. The front side of *ratnapatta* has *makarakūṭa* and *purimas* on all sides. The middle part of *kirita* (*abhiṣeka*) is crowned with major decorative components: *kampa*, *ratnapatta*, *mahāpadma*, *kumuda* and *stūpi* (*mukula*/bud) from bottom. Small *purimas* beautify *ratnapatta* on all sides. *Kaṇapūṣpa*, *kaṇapūra* and big

¹ The terms *vājana*, *ūrdhvaṭṭikā* and *mahāṭṭikā* are invariably used in the *śilpa* and *vāstu* texts denoting the topmost projecting component of the major division. This component with the *ūrdhvala* (*ūrdhva*padma) and plain strip is known as *padmavājana*.

prominent *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears in addition to the hair locks behind the ears. A *kañṭhī*, *grāiveyaka* and noticeable *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper torso. Unusually, the breast-nuts (*stana-cūcuka*) are shown very prominently as if in the female icons.

The hands offshoot at *bāhumūla*. The distance between the side of the body and elbow of the front hand is less than the distance between the elbow of the upper hand and side of the body. The upper hands (*para-hasta*) with *kartarīmukha* turned sidewise and the fingertip are almost to the level of *hikkā-sūtra*. *Cakra* is placed on the right hand and *śaṅkha* is on the left hand in which the tip of the upper flame of both attributes is to the level of *bhrūsūtra*. *Cakra* has six flames - one on the top, one at bottom, two on sides and two from both sides of *nābhi*. *Śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) has three flames - one on the top and two on the sides. The prominent *skandhamālā* is extended and attached to *cakra* and *śaṅkha* at sides, probably to support them because of the delicacy of the workmanship. The front right hand is broken just after the elbow. The upper part of the elbow broken after the bend remains at the level of the *nābhi-sūtra* and this indicates the hand must remain with *pallava-mudrā* which is supposed to hold the *padma*. The lower left hand with *ūruhasta*, slightly turned sidewise, holds the edge of the handle of *gadā*. *Gadā* placed on the *ūrdhavadala* of the pedestal has lost the handle of which a small part remains attached to the palm of the left hand. The fingers, gently bent and raised, indicate the holding of *gadā* at ease. Two *valayas* at the wrist, *keyūras* (with simple *purimas*) above elbow and *aṅgada-valaya* at the crook adorn the hands.

A broad *yajñopavīta* is present a broad fastening at the middle of the chest with where the *pralambasūtra* off shoot and goes inside the garment. A broad *udarabandha* is noticeable above the naval. The fold of the flesh just below the *nābhi* level which makes the *kaṭi-pradeśa* (waist) wider as in female icons.

Pitāmbara is plain and is up to the shank region well above the ankle. The *kaṭibandha* is very ornamental with *kṛtrimavaktra*. The *uttariya* is seen with the central loop and its sashes spread and its ends are placed so as to touch the *padmāsana*. The *pādasaras* adorn the feet.

While looking at the back of the icon, one may wonder to notice the long tresses of curly hair radially arranged from shoulder to shoulder. *Śirascakra* placed at the back of the *kiriṭa* is

not in the shape of wheel but six petals are arranged as if in a circular form. *Kacca* of *pitāmbara* (well designed) behind is beautifully placed.

The facial features and hair style, similar to the Viṣṇu icon (Accn.No.94-5/48), enables one to consider this icon as *Chera* idiom. However, the style of *kartarimukha* and the *cakra* with six flames, similar to the Viṣṇu icons (Accn. No.17) tend the researchers and onlookers to ascribe this icon to Southernmost Tamil country (*Pāṇḍyan* territory). One can safely conclude that this icon is a creation in the region between the present Kerala and Pāṇḍyan region. The finding of this Viṣṇu icon in the heartland of Cholas might be due to transportation of this icon to this region. From the stylistic combination of features, this icon is datable to 15th Century and this indicates uncorrupted (non-modified) principles of icon making and prevalence of *Pāñcarātra* traditions during this time.



**Fig.33. Viṣṇu, Accn.No.879/78
back view**

**Viṣṇu as Keśava, Avidi, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh,
Accn. No. 83/44**

The placement of the four attributes viz., *cakra*, *śankha*, *gadā* and *padma* in different changing modes results in twentyfour forms of Viṣṇu, generally known as secondary grade *Vyūha-mūrtis*. This unique feature is found *Pāñcarātra Āgama* and some *Purāṇas* like *Agnipurāṇa* as well as *śilpa* works like *Rūpamaṇḍana*. This iconic concept is not found in *Vaikhānasa* treatises. However, the description of twelve *mūrtis* (Keśava - Dāmodara) found in only one text, viz., *Prakīrṇādhikāra*¹ of *Bṛghu* in which three more attributes viz., *asi* (dagger), *dhanus* (bow) and *khaḍga* (sword) poses a question whether it is a later inter-polation. The combination of attributes mentioned in *Prakīrṇādhikāra* for twelve *mūrtis* hardly tally with the descriptions uniformly found in the *Pāñcarātra* literature and some *Purāṇas* as well as the monuments found in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Moreover, *Prakīrṇādhikāra* does not clearly mention the order of the *ayudhas* like *Pāñcarātra* and other *Purāṇic* literature.



**Fig.34. Viṣṇu as Keśava,
Accn. No. 83/44**

Keśava, the foremost form of the twenty four forms of Viṣṇu, should hold *padma*, *sankha*, *cakra* and *gadā* in clockwise order right from the lower right hand, according to *Pādma saṁhitā*¹ and *Hayaśīrṣasaṁhitā*² of *Pāñcarātra* literature.

This icon of Viṣṇu in the form of Keśava is depicted in *samapādasthānaka* standing stance on a circular *padmapīṭha* over a square *upapīṭha*. The Components of the square *upapīṭha* from bottom to top are: *upāna*, *padma*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa*, *mahāpaṭṭī*; the circular *padmapīṭha* comprises *adhodala*, *kampa*, *paṭṭikā*, *kampa*, *ūrdhvala* and *karṇikā* as the support for the foot-plate of the icon.

In this four-armed icon, the right and left upper hands hold *śaṅkha* and a *cakra* respectively. The hands are not in usual *kartarimukha*³ but in natural way holding the stem attached at the bottom of both *śaṅkha* and *cakra*. The lower right hand holds the stalk of the lotus which is unusually larger in size comparable to the one found in other icons. The lower left hand with bend at elbow rose to the *hrdayāvadhi-sūtra* level and having the palm and fingers in inverted *pallava-hasta* holds a *gadā* of which the slightly bulbous end is placed on the foot-plate. However, according to the prescriptions of *āgamas* and *śilpaśāstra*, the palm of the hand holding *gadā* should be at the level of *kaṭisūtra*, with the gap of two *aṅgulas* between the side of the body and the palm.⁴ As such, *gadā* is supposed to have the height of four or five *tālas* proportionately, with reference to the icon in standing stance. However, in this icon, the *gadā* has the measure of 6½ or 7 *tālas*. The arms offshoot from *bāhumūla*. The hands are adorned with three *valayas* at the wrist and *keyūras* just above the elbow. The fingers are adorned with rings.

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*, 16.29b-30:

² *Hayaśīrṣa 'ādi'*. 19.4-5a (cf Smith, Daniel H, op. cit., p.161)

³ *Parahasta* (back hand) holding *śaṅkha* and *cakra* should be in *kartarimukha*, according to *Pādma saṁhitā*, *Nāradya Saṁhitā* and *Vimānārcanākalpa*. (vide. details of *kartarimukha*)

⁴ *Pādma (Kriyā)*. 20.81b; *Nāradya*. 13.182b (vide. details of *kaṭihasta/kaṭyāmbana-hasta*).

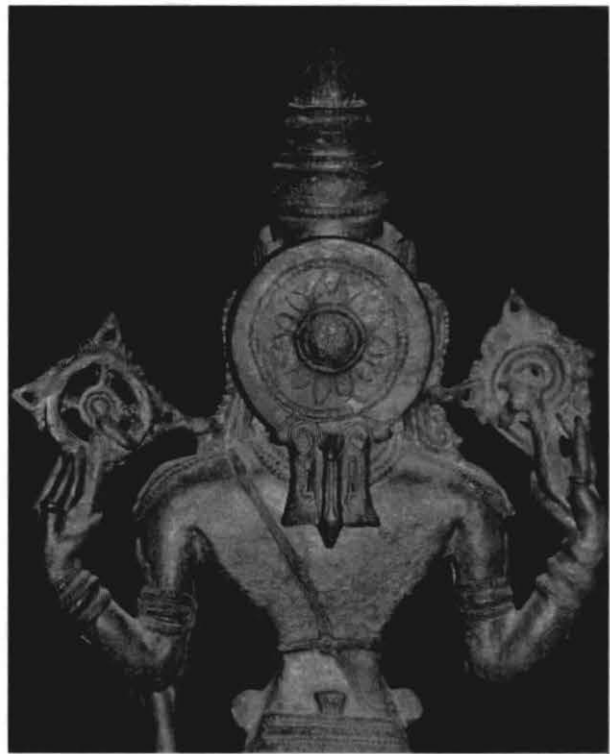
The face is nearly oval and the torso of the icon is comparatively thin with reference to the iconographic prescriptions. The girth at the waist level, supposed to be equal to the space between the armpits (*kakṣāntara*), is very narrower. This leads to the slender lower part of the icon from *madhya* level of the icon. Though the icon is in *samapādasthānaka*, the interspace between the toes and space between the heels is same.

The *makuṭa* on his head resembles the *karaṇḍa-makuṭa*. However, the description of *karaṇḍa-makuṭa* is not strictly followed. It appears as if two pitchers (*kalaśa*) are placed one above the other with a *mukuṭa* (bud) on the top. It has a small *purima* on the front side. The bottom of the *makuṭa* does not extend to the edges of the head but little inside. A *ratnapaṭṭa* adorns the *makuṭa* below the *purima*. The ears and the long earlobes (*karnapāśa*) are adorned with *makara-kunḍala* and *karnapūra* respectively. *Skandhamālā* and *bāhumūlā* are present on both shoulders. A *kañṭhī* (*upagrīva*) and long *hāra* with *kaustubha* with five faces adorn the chest. *Yajñasūtra*, like a thread, is alone present and *stana-sūtra* and *urassūtra* are missing. *Udarabandha* with a prominent central medallion is placed above the naval. A broad *kaṭibandha* is decorated with eight petals (*aṣṭadala-padma*).

Pitāmbara, fashioned like *hastisuṇḍikā* with frills and sashes extending up to the lower part of his garment, is up to the top part of the shank of the leg whereas it is supposed to extend up to the ankles. Two *pādavalayas* just above the ankle and a *Pādasaras* adorn the foot.

At the backside, the *kañṭhī* and *graiveyaka* are to the level of *hikkā-sūtra* of the icon. The *śirascakra*, which is supposed to be twelve *aṅgulas* wide (i.e., within the *mukhaparyanta-sūtra*) is more than normal size which we come across. It has a bulb-like central portion and festoons are hanging from the bottom. *Cakra* and *śaṅkha* are naturally fashioned with flames issuing from all sides. The flames are joined in the *cakra* make it almost square. The back hands are also slender and they are adorned with *keyūras* with *purimas* turned sidewise.

Following the prescription of the *Pāñcarātra* tradition, the icon is created meticulously themewise. However, with reference to iconometric details, the creator of this icon appears to have taken freehand which enables the onlooker to consider this as a creation of low merit. Generally, these are the common features of the icons in this region i.e., East Godavari District, where the style of early Pāla and Sena dynasties had been carried as the regional style.



**Fig.35. Viṣṇu as Keśava, Accn. No.83/44
back view**

The angular form of *upāna* of *upapīṭha* suggests that the icon is to be inserted in another pedestal where the consorts also to be added. This is confirmed also by the absence of *prabhāśaṅku* (props) or *prbhāsuṣira* (socket) which are normally found attached to the upper component of the *upapīṭha*. Two holes on the *kaṇṭha* part for the insertion of metal rods to hold the icon during the procession is indicative of this icon to be *calamūrti* (processional icon/*kāutuka*). The foot-plate of the icon is slightly depressed in the pedestal. From the stylistic features, this icon of Viṣṇu as Keśava can be dated to the 18th Century AD.

Viṣṇu as Keśava, Chimakurti, Ongole Taluk, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh, Accn. No. 12.

This is also an icon of Viṣṇu as Keśava, with reference to iconographic injunctions of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* and some of the *Purāṇas*.

In this icon of Keśava, Viṣṇu is depicted in standing stance following the rules of *samapādashānaka*. The icon slightly leans on the left side with reference to the pedestal. However, the main icon i.e., head to foot is in straight line as applicable to *samapādashānaka*.

In this icon, the upper right hand holds *śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) and the upper left holds *cakra*, both the hands in *kartarīmukha*. With reference to the Āgamic injunctions about the dimensions of attributes (*āyudhas*), both are larger in size i.e., one and half *tāla*

proportionate to the face of the icon. In such, the tip of the fingers of *kartarīmukha* is to the level of *hikkā-sūtra* but the flame of *cakra* and *śaṅkha* is extended to the level of *uṣṇīṣa-paṭṭa*. The lower right hand holds a *padma* (lotus) with its stem held between *tarjanī* and *aṅguṣṭha* in a natural way, in which the hand gesture resembles *vyākhyāna-mudrā*. This hand is supposed to



Fig.36. Viṣṇu as Keśava, Accn. No.12.

be *abhaya-mudrā* with *padma*. However, the sculptor might have created this gesture also to include the role of Keśava, the foremost form of Viṣṇu, who is the revealer of wisdom to Brahma and others. The lower left hand slightly bent at the elbow and unusually brought forward almost like *kaṭihasta* with the palm turned downwards to hold *gadā*. Although *gadā* is missing, the socket on the foot-plate of the pedestal confirms its presence. The arms offshoot from *bāhumūla*. The distance between the *kūrpara* (crook) and the side of the body, between *maṇibandha* and side of the body, and *kartarimukha* and the *bāhumūla* are verily more than what is prescribed in the Āgamic treatises. The hands are adorned with one *valayas* each and *keyūras*. *Skandhamālā* and *bāhumālā* adorn both the shoulders.

The face of the icon is smaller with reference to *tāla* measure of the lower right hand. The neck has three lines, supposed to resemble the spirals of the *śaṅkha*, as one of the auspicious signs (*uttama lakṣaṇa*). The body is slender and the *janghā* (shank) of the leg is proportionately larger.

The *maṭuṭa* is unusual and this resembles *keśabandha*. It has four main sections; the lower most in *karāṇḍa* type with a small *purimas* in front, the next prominent part with *keśa*-design, *padma* and *mukula*. The *keśa*-design enables one to think of the epithet of the word Keśava, allotted to Viṣṇu etymologically on account of his unique feature 'possessor of beautiful hair.' It is interesting to note that the curly hair (*alaka*) is shown on the forehead also below the *ratnapaṭṭa*, which adorns the *maṭuṭa* at the bottom. *Karṇapuṣpa* and *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the upper ear and earlobes respectively.

Graiveyaka and a long *hāra* adorn the upper part of torso. A triband *udarabandha* is placed just at the bottom of breast. *Yajñopavīta* is visible upto the level of *udarabandha*. *Pītāmbara* is fashioned with horizontal curves and the design of flowers in between the curves. *Kaṭibandha* is broad and plain. *Ūrudama* is designed in such a way that the middle string forms a beautiful semi-circular loon in the middle, almost like *mekhalā* applicable to female icons. *Nūpuras* above the ankles and *pādasaras* on the feet adorn the legs.

Pitāmbara is designed with horizontal curves and floral design between them. It is extended upto the upper part of *jaṅghā*. *Kaṭibandha* is plain. The semi-circular loop in the middle below the *kaṭibandha* is formed by *ūrudāma* itself. *Nūpura* above the ankle and *pādasaras* on the feet adorn the legs.

The pedestal of the icon has two parts - *upapīṭha* and *padmapīṭha*. The square *upapīṭha* consists of *upāna*, *kampa*, *jagatī*, *padma*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. The circular *padmapīṭha* comprises of square *upāna*, *adhodala*, *paṭṭikā* and *ūrdhavadala*. *Karṇikā*, functioning as the foot-plate of the icon is concave rather plain. *Prabhā-śaṅku* is fixed on *ūrdhvapaṭṭī* of *upapīṭha*. *Prabhāvalī* is designed very well. Its *pāda-varga* (leg) is to the height of the level of middle thigh of the icon. *Makaras* on the *pādavarga* support the main part of *prabhāvalī* issued from their mouth. It has four *yaṣṭis*, the first and third *yaṣṭis* are thin. The second *yaṣṭi* is broad and it has design of flower. The last *yaṣṭi* (final rim) is topped with *kīrtimukha* in the middle decorated with a *stūpi*. On both sides of *kīrtimukha* upto *makara*, fully blown lotus petals are arranged serially. The *prabhāvalī*, by its grand design, adjusts the flaws in the icon.



**Fig.37. Viṣṇu as Keśava,
Accn. No.12. back view**

At the backside of the icon, *śiraścakra* is designed beautifully with only the spokes (*ara*) without rim. Festoons issue from the central knob. Back part of *hāra* is shown very well. *Kacca* of *pītāmbara* is natural.

From the iconographical point of view, the body is slender but the fingers and hands are not to the proportion. This may be due to regional technique of fashioning the icon. Thematically, this icon is undoubtedly one of the rare specimens of Keśava form of Viṣṇu with reference to *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. It can be dated to 18th Century AD.

Viṣṇu, Siruvattur, South Arcot District, Accn. No.79-1/43.

The icon of Viṣṇu standing in *samapādashānaka* stance on a pedestal which has two major divisions viz., *upapīṭha* and *padmapīṭha*. The components of the rectangular *upapīṭha* from bottom to top are: *upāna*, *padma*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. *Kaṇṭha* has *pāda* design at the corners and zig-zag design on all sides. The elliptical *padmapīṭha* has *adhodala*, *ūrdhva-dala* and *karṇikā* functioning as foot-plate of the icon.

The slightly oval face is adjusted as normal by the broad multi-angular *ratna-paṭṭa*. The long *kiriṭa-makuṭa* is very unique in its design and style since, it is proportionately half time larger than the face. The vertically banded *ratnapaṭṭa*



Fig.38. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.79-1/43

design of the *abhiṣeka* (central part of crown) dominates the triangular shaped *patra-purimas* on four sides which are proportionately smaller.

Because of the *ratnapaṭṭa*, the forehead (*lalāṭa*) appears narrower; the eyebrows, the eyes and nose are prominent. However, one can notice the difference between the right and left chin. *Makara-kunḍalas* adorn the earlobes

the same way the *karnapuṣpa* does on the top of ears from where the *karnapūras* are shown like strings.

Of the four hands, *cakra* and *śaṅkha* are held on the upper ones with *kartarīmukha* in which the pair of stretched fingers are wide open. Both *cakra* and *śaṅkha* have three flames, one on the top and two on sides. The lower right hand has *abhaya-mudrā* with the tip of the middle finger remaining 1½ *tāla* away from the breast-nut; and, the thumb is kept away. The lower left hand with upturned palm is placed on the *gadā*; and, the palm is slightly turned away. *Gadā* is placed on the *karnikā* of *padmapīṭha* near the left foot. Two *valayas* on the wrist, one *valaya* at the crook and *keyūras* above adorn the hands. The palm of the hands has *rekḥā* designs.

A *kaṇṭhī*, a broad *grāiveyaka*, *hāra* and *Śrīvatsa* are present on the upper part of chest. *Skandhamālā* and *bāhumālā* adorn the shoulders. The three-stranded *yajñopavīta*, unusually without knot, divides near the left breast-nut as *stanaśūtra*, *yajñasūtra* and *urassūtra*. *Udarabandha* is seen above the slightly bulged stomach.

The *pītāmbara* with the horizontal strips is fashioned like a *hastīśuṇḍikā* and it extends upto the ankle decorated with *pādasaras*. The broad *kaṭibandha* with a small a somewhat designed *kṛtrimavaktra* and *ūrudāma* are additions on the upper part of *pītāmbara*.

At the backside, the *śiraścakra* with festoons emanating from the centre is fixed on the backside of the *kiriṭa*. The *pralambasūtra* is not seen at the back. *Kacca* of the *pītāmbara* both below and above the *kaṭibandha* is noteworthy. As far as the iconographical features are concerned, this icon of Viṣṇu is complete with all prescribed and required details. With reference to workmanship, the fine carving aspect is somewhat less which can be noticed at the back of the *kartarīmukha* as well as the two sides of the face. However, the size of the icon may be plausible reason for the workmanship. This icon of standing Viṣṇu is datable to about 16th Century AD.

**Viṣṇu, Vaduvur Vadapathi, Mannargudi Taluk, Thanjavur District.
Accn. No. 387/57**

This icon of standing Viṣṇu is noteworthy for the elegant and majestic workmanship. The face is round with prominent facial features, especially the nose and lips. However, the height of the neck is reduced with reference to the iconometry.¹ The engraving of eyeballs (*netronmīlana*) confirms this icon to be of worshipped one. The *kiriṭa*, measuring the same height of the face, is slightly conical. *Makara-purima* in the front, two *purimas* on the sides below *latā* design on *abhiṣeka*, *ratnakacita* design on *abhiṣeka* are traceable but corroded. The set of *ratanapaṭṭa* (*muktādāma*, *ratana-paṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha*) adorn the *makuṭa* on the top. The strings (*muktādāma*) above the forehead are beautified with array of flowers on the top. The long earlobes are adorned with small *makara-kunḍalas* resting on the shoulders from where the *skandhamālā* begins.



Fig.39. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.387/57

¹ According to *Āgamas* and *śilpasāstra*, the height of the *kaṇṭha*, *jānu* and ankle to foot are four *angulas* i.e. one third *tāla* proportionate to the icon. (vide. Measures of *uttamadaśatāla*)

This four-armed icon of Viṣṇu holds *cakra* and *śaṅkha* on the right and left upper hands respectively. *Kartarimukha* is turned sidewise and the flames of the attributes rest on the stretched fingers. *Cakra* with the depressed *ara* (spokes) has six *javālās*, one on the top, one at the bottom, two on the sides and two from the *nābhi* on both sides. The *śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) has three flames, one on the top and two on the sides. The lower right hand with *abhaya-mudrā* slightly kept away more than prescribed with its middle finger little above the *stana-cūcuka*. The lower left hand with upturned palm and loosely spread fingers brought little forward is placed on the tip of *gadā* of which the bulbous end rests on the foot plate. The bulbous part of *gadā* measures almost the height of half of the handle. Three *valayas* at the wrist of all hands, *keyūras* with broad *makarakūṭa* on the lower hands and two *valayas* in the mid part of *bāhu* (upper arm) of upper hands are *hasta-bhūṣaṇas*.

A *kañṭhī*, broad *grāiveyaka*, a *hāra* and Śrīvatsa adorn the upper part of the chest. On the left side above the *kakṣasūtra*, fastening of the *yajñopavīta* is present. *Stanasūtra* with multiple bends is noteworthy. *Urassūtra/pralambasūtra* offshoots from the fastening and runs inside the *kaṭibandha*. Three-stringed *udarabandha* appears at the level of *hrdayāvadhisūtra*. The folding of *kaṭibandha* in consonance with the folded and slightly projecting belly is noteworthy in this icon.

Pitāmbara is beautifully worked in *hastisuṇḍikā* fashion with *kaṭibandha* decorated with *kṛtṛmāsyā* as well as *ūrudāma*. The *uttariya* with its semi-circular loop in front and its sashes are evenly positioned. *Pādapatra/bhujaṅgavalaya* is noticeable only on the right leg above the ankle in addition to the *pādasaras* on the feet.

The *pīṭha* (pedestal) measuring almost half of the height of the icon of Viṣṇu, has two major divisions viz., *upapīṭha* and *padmapīṭha* in which the *padmapīṭha* measures one third of the height of the *upapīṭha*. Hence, the *upapīṭha* is prominent. Moreover, the height of the *ūrdhavadala* of the *padmapīṭha* is reduced. The components of the square *upapīṭha* from bottom

to top are: *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. *Kaṇṭha* has *pāda* designs at the corners. The elliptical *padmapīṭha* consist of *adhodala* and *ūrdhvala*. The props (*prabhāśaṅku*) are attached to the *ūrdhvapaṭṭī* and *kampa* below. The foot-plate on the *padmapīṭha* is slightly depressed.

While looking at the back of the icon, what is attractive is the *śiraścakra* with its diameter equal to the size of the face. The *pralambasūtra* is seen at the back which goes inside the *kaṭibandha*. The *kacca* of the *pītāmbara* below and above the *kaṭibandha* is in natural fashion.

The position of the *kirīṭa-makuṭa*, the ornaments, *cakra* and *śaṅkha*, facial features, *śiraścakra* and the details of the *gadā* collectively help to date this icon to the 13th Century AD.



**Fig.40. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.387/57
back view**

**Viṣṇu, Tiruvonamangalam, Valangiman Taluk, Thanjavur District.
Accn. No.449/60**

This icon of Viṣṇu in *samapādashānaka* standing stance, datable to circa. 13th Century AD, is noteworthy for some of the unique features such as *udarabandha*, *śiraścakra* and ornaments. The face is round with all prominent facial features especially the lips, nose and chin. The neck has three lines (*kambugrīva*). The *kirīṭa-makuṭa* has *ratnapaṭṭa* at the base on which a large *makrakūṭa* or *makara-purima* is present on the front side. Small *makara-purimas* are noticed on three sides. *Mālā*, commencing from the mouth of *makaras* of the frontal *makara-purima*, runs above the side *purimas* and ends at the back. *Abhiṣeka* with *ratnakacita* design is beautified with *muktāmālā*, *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) in order on the top. *Karṇapuṣpa*, *karnapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears.

In this four armed icon of Viṣṇu, the upper hands with *kartarimukha* hold semi-profile *cakra* and *vāmāvarta śaṅkha* on the right and left respectively. *Cakra* has four *jvālās*, one on the top, one at the bottom and two on the sides; *śaṅkha* has three flames, one on the



Fig.41. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.449/60

top and two on the sides. *Śaṅkha* is noteworthy for its spirals and the cavity in the middle. The lower right hand bears *abhaya-mudrā* leaning outwards almost like *patāka-hasta*. The lower left hand, with bend at elbow and forearm lightly raised up, brought forward and the upturned palm is like *kaṭihasta* and is placed on the handle of the *gadā*. Unusually, the lower part of palm is placed on the *gadā* instead of mid-palm. The lower end of *gadā*, slightly bulbous, is placed near the left foot on the *karṇikā* of the pedestal. Because of the position of the hand, *gadā* is longer measuring five *tālas* proportionate to the icon. Three *ratnavalayas* at the wrist, *keyūras* in the middle of the *bāhu* (upper arm) in addition to *aṅgaḍa/kūrparavalaya* (except the upper right hand) adorn the hands. The *kūrparavalaya* exactly at the crook (*kūrpara*) only on the back left hand is noteworthy.

A *kaṇṭhī*, *graiveyaka* with *netra-bandha* design, *skandhamālā*, *bāhumālā* and *Śrīvatsa* beautify the chest in addition to *yajñopavīta*. *Yajñopavīta* is three-stranded with its fastening near the left *kakṣa*. *Stanāsūtra* and *urassūtra* bifurcate in the mid chest; the *urassūtra/pralambasūtra* deviates from the middle line and goes inside the *kaṭibandha*. *Udarabandha* has a front medallion with *makarakūṣa* which is generally found on the *kiriṭa* and *keyūras*. *Kaṭibandha* with *kṛtrimavaktra* and *ūrudāma* beautify the *pītāmbara* fashioned in *hastisūṇḍikā*. The sashes of the *uttariya*, generally seen at the waist level, are found slightly below *kaṭibandha*. A small folding of cloth above the *kaṭibandha* on the left side is noteworthy. *Bhujāṅgavalaya/pādapatra*, in the form of an extension of the cloth, is noticeable only on the right leg above the ankle. *Pādasaras* decorates the feet.

The *pīṭha* of this icon of Viṣṇu standing in *samapādashānaka* posture has two major division viz., *upapīṭha* and *padmapīṭha*. The components of the square *upapīṭha* from bottom to top are: *upāna*, *padma*, *vṛttakumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. The circular *padmapīṭha* has the following components: *adhodala* and *ūrdhvaladala* with support for the foot-plate of the

icon. The props (*śaṅku*) extended from *ūrdhvapaṭṭī* and *kampa* below. Unusually, one ring on both sides is present in the pedestal of this icon.

While looking at the back of the icon, a beautiful well-designed *śiraścakra* placed at the back of the *kirīṭa* is noteworthy. The *śiraścakra* resembles almost the Sudarśana *cakra* but without flames. Small festoons are attached to the *āraṅkūṭa* (inner ring) with a *mukula*. It is a separately cast component fixed on the rod attached at the back of the head which confirms the rule that the *śiraścakra* may be cast separately.¹ The scarce ringlets of the hair from the nap of the head are seen within the string of the necklace at the back. Based on these findings, this icon can be dated to the 14th-15th centuries AD.



**Fig.42. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.449/60
back view**

¹ Vide. *Madhūcciṣṭa-kriyā*.

Viṣṇu, Chidambaranathapuram, Thanjavur District, Accn. No.549/66

In this icon of well-ornamented Viṣṇu standing in *samapādashānaka*, the *pīṭha* is very simple with two major components. The rectangular *upapīṭha* consists of *upāna*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha* (with the depiction of *pādavarga*), *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. The *padmapīṭha* has *adhodala*, *paṭṭikā* and *ūrdhvadala*. The props (*śaṅku*) are projected from *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*.

The round face with prominent eyebrows, eyelids and eye balls, sharp and prominent nose (*tuṅga-nāsa*) and well-opened lips is decorated with a long *kirīṭa-makuṭa* and *lalāṭapaṭṭa*. The *purimas* of the *kirīṭa* are designed like stone-studded ornament. The *latā-toraṇa* design issues from the mouth of two *makaras* below the frontal *purima*. The top of *makuṭa* is beautified with *muktāmālā*, *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha*. The long earlobes are beautified with *makara-kunḍalas*, in addition to *karnapuṣpa* and *karnapūra* on *karna-nāla*. A beaded *kaṇṭhī*, *grāiveyaka* with *netra-bandha* design and beaded *hāra* adorn the upper torso.

Śrīvatsa in the form of two armed Lakṣmī seated on *padmāsana* posture on the right *vakṣasthala* is a unique feature. *Skandhamālās* are present on both the shoulders whereas necklace-type *bāhumālā* with a pendant is present only on



Fig.43. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.549/66

the left shoulder. A five-stringed *yajñopavīta* has its fastening on the upper left *vakṣasthala*. The uppermost string passing at the level of *hṛdayāvadhisūtra* is *stana-sūtra*; the lower most string i.e. *urassūtra* (*pralambasūtra*) goes down inside *kaṭibandha*; and, other three strings function as *yajñasūtra*. A beautiful broad ornate *udarabandha* is present.

Of the four hands, the upper hands are *kartarīmukha* with the palm turned towards the onlooker. However, *cakra* and *śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) held on the right and left respectively are in semi-profile posture. The *cakra* and *śaṅkha* have four flames, one on the top, two on the sides and one at the bottom turns towards the left side of the icon. The lower right hand with *abhaya-mudrā* leaning outwards almost like *patāka-hasta* has two horizontal lines at the joint of fingers with the palm. The lower left hand slightly brought forward and the upturned palm is placed on the handle of *gadā*. The slightly bulbous part of *gadā*, measuring one fourth of the total height is stripped and is placed near the left foot on the *karnikā* of the pedestal. The *keyūras* resembling the *purimas* of the *kirīṭa* are present on all the hands. Three *ratna-valayas* at the wrist and one *valaya* at the crook beautify the hands.



**Fig.44. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.549/66
back view**

The *kaṭibandha* is very broad with a large *kṛtrimavaktra* which forms the source of a few strings of *ūrudāma*. The upper end of *pītāmbara* above the *kaṭibandha* is noteworthy. The *pītāmbara* is fashioned in *hastīśuṇḍikā* form with horizontal lines and with the sashes of *uttariya* hanging below the *kaṭibandha*. Extension of the garment is shown only on the right leg above the ankle. *Pādasaras/pādajāla* adorns the feet.

The ornamentation at the backside of the icon is also equally noteworthy. The *śiraścakra* with beautiful rim, spokes and the festoon issued from the middle are well proportionate as if in case of *Sudarśana cakra*. The broad back part of necklace is the limit for radially arranged tresses of hair. Below this, the *yajñopavīta*, fashioned in the same pattern of the front side, has fastening and the division of *urassūtra* and *stanaśūtra*. The *kacca* is placed exactly at the back with its folds above the *kaṭibandha*. All above unique features enable this icon to be ascribed to 11th Century AD.

Viṣṇu, Natham, South Arcot District, Accn. No. 747/75

This icon of Viṣṇu in *samapādasthānaka* standing posture is one of the icon of *Pāñcarātra* theme and one of the best pieces of standard *Vaiṣṇava* iconography irrespective of its size being less than six inches.

Of the two major divisions of *pīṭha* viz., *upapīṭha* and *padmapīṭha*, the components of the rectangular *upapīṭha* from bottom to top are: *upāna*, *padma*, *ālinga*,¹ *antarita*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kañṭha* (with *pāda* design), *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭi*; the circular *padmapīṭha* consists of *kampa/upāna*, *adhodala* and *ūrdhvala* which is the socket for fixing the foot plate of the icon.²

The upper hands bearing *kartarīmukha* slightly inclined towards the shoulder and the right palm faces the onlooker while the left palm is turned slightly sidewise. *Cakra* on the right hand has eight *aras* (spokes) with *nābhi* (two rings in the middle) and two



Fig.45. Viṣṇu, Accn. No. 747/75

¹ *Kampa* is a thin horizontal strip in the components of pedestal dividing the major sections. This is known also with other terms like *dhṛk*. *Kaṇṭha*, one of the major parts, when joined with other major parts both above and below, is always attached to *kampa* both above and below. The same *kampa* above any curvilinear component like *kumuda* and *kapota* is known as *ālinga*. The next strip receding inside is known as *antarita*.

² Four pieces of cross rod found beneath the footplate at the middle level of *urdhvadala* confirms the *jātibandhana* here.

external rims. *Vāmāvarta śaṅkha* is on the left side. They have four flames, one on the top, two on the sides and one at the bottom. The tip of the *kartarimukha* at the left hand is slightly raised above that of the right hand probably on account of the position of the lower left hand. However the tip of the upper flame of both *cakra* and *śaṅkha* is at the level of *keśānta* (hair level) in front side. The lower right hand with *abhaya-mudrā* with the trace of lotus stem in the palm is correctly positioned. The lower left hand is like *ūruhasta* with its upturned palm slightly turned outside is placed on the handle of *gadā*. The bulbous part of *gadā*, one third of its total height, rests on the foot plate. The front hands are adorned with *keyūras* above the crook, *valaya* at *kūrpara* and the wrists; and, the upper hands have *valaya* above the *kūrpara* and at the wrists.

The round face is well proportionate with eyebrows, eyes. However, the little long nose made the lips little down by which the chin (*cubuka*) appears narrower. The *kirīṭa* measuring one and half *tāla* is slightly conical and its base is placed just above *pūrva-keśānta*. The *purīmas* are smaller and they are dominated by stone studded long *abhiṣeka* (middle part of *kirīṭa*). Upper *ratnapaṭṭa* has three bands and topped with *padma* and *kaustubha*. A broad *lalāṭapaṭṭa* beautifies the forehead in addition to larger *karnapuspa*, *karnapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* on the ears. *Skandhamālā*, *bāhumālā*, *kaṇṭhi* and *grāiveyaka* adorn the upper part of the chest. Due to heavy corrosion, Śrīvatsa is not traceable. *Yajñopavīta* with broad fastening almost in the middle of the chest above the breast nut divides into three viz., *stanaśūtra*, *yajñasūtra* and *urassūtra/pralambasūtra*; and, the *pralambasūtra* deviates and moves towards the left side and goes within the garment. A broad *udarabandha* with a larger central medallion is present. The trifold *kaṭibandha* enables to realise slightly projected belly.

The *pītāmbara* is fashioned like a *hastīśundikā* and has horizontal lines. The *uttariya*, attached with string of bells, has a central loop showing the upper part of *pītāmbara* between *kaṭibandha* and *medhira-sūtra*. *Ūrudāma* is present. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

At the back side of the icon of Viṣṇu, *śiraścakra* is prominent with the festoons originating from the well-projected central knob. The short hair locks are arranged symmetrically at the nap of the neck. Broad necklaces are shown at the back also. The falling of the *yajñopavīta* is natural with the knot to join the *stanaśūtra*. The sashes of *uttariya* are arranged beautifully on the sides. The icon has innumerable porous points all over. From the stylistic features, this icon is datable to the 14th -15th Century AD.



**Fig.46. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.747/75
back view**

Viṣṇu, Munnavalkottai, Thanjavur District, Accn. No.190/52

This icon of Viṣṇu is in *samapādashānaka* standing posture on elliptical *padmapīṭha* supported by rectangular *upapīṭha*. The components of the rectangular *upapīṭha* from bottom to top are: *upāna*, *padma*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha* (with *pāda* design), *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*; the circular *padmapīṭha* has components: *adhodala*, *ūrdhvadala* and *paṭṭikā*. A separate projected part in the form of *ūrdhvadala* is attached on the upper part of *ūrdhvadala* for fitting the lower end of *gadā* which is normally sidewise, but placed here in the front side.

The round face with little bulge cheeks and facial features is decorated with a long *kirīṭa*. Multi-angular *lalāṭapaṭṭa* beautifies the forehead. Small *makara-purimas* are present at the base of *makuṭa* on all sides. The *latā-toraṇa* design originating from the mouth of the *makaras* of the frontal *purima* culminates at the *makaras* at the back *purima*. *Abhiṣeka* is designed like stone-studded. Upper part of *makuṭa* is ornamented with thin *ratnapaṭṭa*, *ūrdhwapadma*, broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha*.



Fig.47. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.190/52

The long earlobes are adorned with *makara-kunḍalas*, of which the mouth of *makaras* hold the stringed end of *karnapūra* hanging from *karnanāḷa*, decorated with the *karnapuṣpa* on the top of the ear. *Skandhamālā* extends to the fold of elbow.

Of the four arms dividing from the upper arms, the back hands with *kartarīmukha* hold *cakra* and *śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) on the right and left respectively. The tip of the stretched fingers of *kartarīmukha* remains at the level of *hikkā-sūtra*. However, on account of the size, the tip of the upper flame of the attributes is above the level of *keśānta*. *Cakra* has twelve spokes (*ara*) resembling the shape of *yava* grain. Both *cakra* and *śaṅkha* have four flames, two on the sides, one on the top and one at the bottom turned towards inside. The lower right hand bears *abhaya-mudrā* slightly leaning outside, hence, kept away from the side of the body. The lower left hand slightly folded at elbow with its upturned palm brought forward very well which causes the lower end of *gadā* to be placed on a separate projection on the *padmapīṭha* instead of being placed on the side of the foot. A projected socket in the palm holds the upper part of *gadā*. This is one of the best specimens of craftsmanship to cast *gadā* separately and fit between the sockets of the hand and the pedestal by the process of *jaṭibandhana*. One third of *gadā* with three bands forms the bulbous part of lower end. The *kakṣamālā* on the front side of the upper arm, two *valayas* at the wrist of front hands and one *valaya* at the wrist of the back hands beautify the icon. In the front hand, *keyūras* (with *makarakūṭa*) are at the crook instead of above the crook, plausibly due to the extension of the *skandhamālā*.

The neck has three folding like the spiral of the *śaṅkha* marking the possession of *kambugrīva* as one of the characteristics of *uttama-lakṣaṇa*. A *kañṭhī*, *graiveyaka* and *hāra* adorn the neck. *Yajñopavīta* is single-stranded with the fastening near the left *vakṣasthala*. This divides into three, one as stringed *stanaśūtra*, one as *yajñasūtra* and another one as *urassūtra* (*pralambasūtra*) which goes inside the *kaṭibandha* and *pīṭambara*. *Udarabandha* is present

above the prominent naval (*gabhīra-nābhi*). The lower stomach is beautifully depicted with folding of flesh.

Pitāmbara in *hastisundikā* fashion with prominent folds is beautified with a broad *kaṭibandha* with the central moulding of *kṛtrimavaktra* in the form of *simha/vyāla*. The strings issued from the head and the teeth formed *ūrudāma*. *Uttariya* at the *medhra* level is shown straight horizontally instead of usual semi-circular loop. The sashes of *uttariya* are shown on both sides



**Fig.48. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.190/52
back view**

in three levels up to the border of *pitāmbara*. *Bhujāṅgavalaya* (*pādapaṭra*) is shown only on the left leg above the ankle. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

While looking at the back, the *śiraścakra* captures the eyes of the onlooker. It has beautiful rims with multiple spokes of which twenty-four are seen. The festoons issued from the centre are prominent and *śiraścakra* is placed exactly at the back of the head and as per the *Āgamic* prescription. (*netrasamam śiraścakram*). The hair tresses are radially arranged at the back in simple way. *Yajñopavīta* has a small fastening from where the *stanaśūtra* and *yajñasūtra* bifurcate. The *kacca* is also quiet natural and the sashes are beautifully placed at sides. Well-defined ornamentation enables to date this icon to the 14th -15th Centuries AD.

**Viṣṇu, Sirupanaaiyur, Tirutturaippoondi Taluk, Nagapattinam District.
Accn. No. 9**

This icon of Viṣṇu standing in *samapādashānaka* posture is one of the early icons datable to the 8th Century AD, based on the stylistic features. The *pīṭha* is missing. However, the circular foot-plate with also *gadā* placed therein within the periphery indicates the circular pedestal, normally *padmapīṭha*.

In this four-armed icon of Viṣṇu, the upper hands bearing *kartarimukha* are kept little away from the side of the shoulders. The rim of *cakra* on the right upper hand is corroded; it has sixteen spokes and four flames, two on the sides, one on the top and one on the top. *Śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) on the upper left hand has five flames, two on the sides, one at the bottom, one in the front and one on the decorative cap on the top. The lower right hand bears *abhaya-mudrā* little away from the side of the body with the tip of the middle finger lowered well below the *stana-cūcuka*. The lower left hand is slightly folded at elbow and the upturned palm brought forward is placed on the tip of the *gadā* resting on the foot-plate. *Gadā* is not divided into usual two parts



Fig.49. Viṣṇu, Accn. No. 9

i.e. bulbous end and handle. It is almost like a *daṇḍa* diminishing in girth towards the end of the handle. Three *valayas* at the wrist, *keyūras* above the

elbow, *valayas* at the *kūrpara* beautify the hands off shooting from the upper part of the arms.

The round face is very benign (*saumya*) with prominent but slightly corroded eyebrows, eyes, sharp nose and little broad well-pronouncing lips. The beautiful *kiriṭa-makuṭa* adorns the head above *lalāṭa-paṭṭa*. The *makuṭa* is designed with *makara-purimas* on all sides with *latā* above the side *purimas*. The vertical bands on *abhiṣeka* are designed as *ratnakacita*. A wide *muktādāma*, a thin *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* beautify the *makuṭa* on the top.

Karṇapuṣpa in the form of full-blown flowers on the top of the ear, and *karṇapūra* hanging up to lower part of *karṇa-nāla* beautify the face. *Skandhamālā*, arranged in the form of full blown flowers matches to the trunk of *makara* with its tail entering into the long earlobes (*karṇapāśa*), is symmetrical. *Bāhumālā* is semi-circular (*hāra*-like) on the right shoulder and it is simple string on the left shoulder.

The neck with three folding (*kambugrīva*) has a prominent *kaṇṭhī* just below the neck. *Graiveyaka* and *hāra* well below *kaṇṭhī* and Śrīvatsa adorn the chest. A three-stranded *yajñopavīta* with a broad fastening on the left bosom divides into three; comparably, the *stanaśūtra* is shorter with its extension very much above the broad *udarabandha* placed at the level of *hṛdayāvadhisūtra*; *yajñasūtra* is extended up to middle of *kaṭibandha*; and, *urassūtra* (*pralambasūtra*) with bends parallel to *yajñasūtra*, goes inside the *kaṭibandha* and the *pītāmbara*. The folding of the flesh in the lower stomach makes the naval (*gabhīra-nābhi*) prominent.

Kaṭibandha is shown in four bands with prominent *kṛtrimavaktra*. A double-bordered *uttariya* in semi-circular loop, symmetrically beautified with *ūrudāma*, has tassels in natural way both below the *kaṭibandha* and at the lower level of *pītāmbara*, fashioned in *hastisūṇḍikā* style with horizontal folds. *Pādajālas* adorn the feet.

At the back side of the icon, one can notice the *śiraścakra* which is wide and more than the prescribed dimension i.e. twelve *angulas* or the width of the

face. It has sixteen spokes and the festoons are issuing from the central circle of the *cakra*. The central knob to hold the *śiraścakra* is exactly placed at the level of *netra-sūtra* as per the *Āgamic* injunctions. The tresses of hair are radially arranged at the nap and below within the limitation of *hāra* at the back side. The *stana-sūtra* and *yajñasūtra* remain separately at the back. The *kacca* of *pītāmbara* is beautiful and is naturally fashioned.



Fig.50. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.9
back view

Viṣṇu, Komal, Mayiladuturai Taluk, Nagapattinam District, Accn. No.11.

This exquisitely wrought icon of Viṣṇu is in *samapādashānaka* standing stance. The square *upapīṭha*, from bottom to top, consists of *kṣudra-upāna*, *upāna*, *mahāpadma*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa*, *ūrdhva-padma*, *vājana* and *ūrdhva-paṭṭi*. The circular *padma-pīṭha* has the components: *adhodaḷa*, *paṭṭikā*, *ūrdhva-ḍaḷa* and *karnikā* with the provision to set the foot-plate of the icon. The props (*prabhāśaṅku*) are attached as projection at *mahāpaṭṭi* of *upapīṭha*. Two rings are attached on the *upāna* part of *upapīṭha* on both sides for the insertion of metal/wooden rods to hold the icon during the procession.

The benign face is round and has proportionate facial features - sharp nose, beautiful eyebrows and smiling lips. The base of *kiriṭa* is placed a little above the level of *keśānta* in front by which the array of hairs is shown well between the *lalāṭa-paṭṭa* and the base of the *kiriṭa*. Beautiful *makara-purima* in the front beautifies the *abhiṣeka* designed in *ratnakacita* fashion. *Latā* emerging from the mouth of *makaras* runs above the side *purima* like an arch and culminates at the base of *purima* at the back. Above *abhiṣeka*, *muktādāma*, a broad



Fig.51. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.11.

ratnapaṭṭa, *padma* and *kaustubha* add beauty to the *maṭṭa*. A flower-bud as *kaṇapaṣpa* and *kaṇapūra* in the form of *latā* (creeper) adorn the ear in addition to the *makara-kundālas* hanging on the ear-lobes (*kaṇa-pāśa*).

In this four-armed icon of Viṣṇu, the upper hands bearing *kartarimukha* facing the onlooker hold *prayoga-cakra* (semi-profile) and *śaṅkha* on the right and left respectively. *Cakra* has six flames (*jvālās*), one on the top, one at the bottom, two on the sides and two in the *nābhi* on both sides. Uniquely, *śaṅkha* is also in semi-profile position and it has six flames, one on the top, one at the bottom, two on the sides and two on the front and back. The front right hand is *abhaya-hasta*. The front left hand is slightly bent at elbow and the upturned palm is brought a little forward and is placed on the tip of the handle of *gadā*. The bulbous end of *gadā* is placed on the foot-plate next to the little toe rather on the side of the foot. The nails of the fingers are shown very well in original form. Three *ratnavalayas* at the wrist, *keyūras* with beautiful *makarakūṭa* above the elbow and one *valaya* at the *kūrpara* adorn the hands.

The neck has three folds resembling the spiral of *śaṅkha* (*kambugrīva*). *Skandhamālā* is designed as full-blown flower and creeper alternatively. One *hāra*-like *bāhumālā* is present on the upper part of the right arm only whereas a simple string is present on the left side. *Kaṇṭhī*, *grāiveyaka* and *ratna-hāra*, carved independently, adorn the upper chest besides Śrīvatsa designed in the form of two armed Lakṣmī seated in *padmāsana* pose. *Yajñopavīta* has simple knot on the left *vakṣastala*. *Yajñasūtra* has three strings extending up to the lower part of *kaṭibandha*; *stanaśūtra* is above *udarabandha* which has *ratnapaṭṭa* design in the front; and, *urassūtra* deviates from the middle and runs into *kaṭibandha* and *pītāmbara*.

Pītāmbara is designed with horizontal bands showing the texture of the cloth. *Kaṭibandha* is broad with *kṛtrimavaktra*. A beautiful design of curves on both sides of *kṛtrimavaktra* is notable. *Uttariya* has central loop in the front but it is smaller than the *ūrudāma* which is shown like necklace. The sashes of

uttariya are shown on both sides extended to the end of *pītāmbara*. *Pādajāla* adorn the feet with beautifully carved fingers and nails.

At the back side, the *nābhi* (central knob) of the *śiraścakra* is beautifully placed at the *bhrū-sūtra* level instead of *netra-sūtra*. The rim (*nemi*) of the *cakra* and twelve spokes (*ara*) in the form of lotus petal are shown individually. Festoons issue from the central knob. Hair level is short but the curly ringlets are placed radially. The *hāra* and all other ornaments are also shown wider also at the back. *Kacca* is designed in a natural way with end of the *kacca* remains inserted within the garment.

As far as the iconographical details are concerned, undoubtedly this icon is very exclusive. However, the joint of neck with torso is not natural on account of appearance of unusual division and fold exactly at the lower part of neck. Even in the icons of Varāha, Narasimha and Hayagrīva, the sculptor skilfully and tactfully combines the animal head with human body. This flaw in this icon indicates the carelessness of the sculptor. This icon is datable to the 11th Century AD.



**Fig.52. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.11.
back view**

Viṣṇu, Kilthanjavur, Accn. No.1770/94

This icon of Viṣṇu, datable to the 13th-14th Century AD on stylistic features, is in *samapādashānaka* standing stance on a unique pedestal with two major sections. The square *upapīṭha* consists of the components from bottom to top: *upāna*, *padma*, *antarīta*, *paṭṭikā*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kapota* and *āliṅga*. Four *alpānāsikās* (*kṣudra-nāsikās*) are found on *kapota* on all sides. The *padmapīṭha* includes *kampa*, *adhodala*, *ūrdhavadala* and *karnikā* serving as support for foot-plate of the icon which is slightly depressed in the pedestal. Two holes are present on *antarīta* part of *upapīṭha* for the processional purpose.

The face is round with prominent eyes and brows especially the lips. The conical *kirīṭa*, measuring more than the size of face adorn the head. Due to heavy usage for bathing etc. the forehead and the details of *kirīṭa* have corroded. *Lalāṭa-paṭṭa* and *ratna-paṭṭa* above forehead are seen. Traces of large *makara-purima* in the front and small *purimas* on the sides are noticeable. Broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha*



Fig.53. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.1770/94

(*mukula*) beautify the *abhiṣeka* on the top. *Karṇapuspa*, *karṇapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears.

Of the four hands, the back hands bear *kartarīmukha* with the palm turned sidewise. The stretched fingers are broken in the middle; hence, *cakra* and *śaṅkha* are not available. Maṇibandha of the left hand is lower than that of right height. The lower right hand bearing *abhaya-mudrā* but slightly kept away from the body. The lower left hand is *kaṭi-hasta*, the upturned palm placed near the hip. Short *skandhamālās*, *bāhu-mālā*, three *valayas* at the wrist, *keyūra* with *ratna-paṭṭa-purima* and *aṅgada* at the crook are the hand ornaments. A beaded *kaṇṭhī*, a *graiveyaka*, a broad *ratna-hāra*, a *sara* and *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper part of torso. *Yajñopavīta* has the knot on the left *vakṣastala*; *stanaśūtra* is at the bottom of breast; *yajñasūtra* is extended almost to the naval level. *Urassūtra* runs inside the *kaṭi-bandha* and *pītāmbara*. *Udarabandha*, three-banded with decorative central part, remains at the level of *hṛdayāvadhi-sūtra*.



**Fig.54. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.1770/94
back view**

The *kaṭibandha* is broad and simple with *kṛtrima-vaktra*. The *pītāmbara* is beautifully done with horizontal lines. It is extended more on the right leg than the left one. The semi-circular loop of the *uttariya* in the front and its sashes beautifully fashioned are harmonious with *ūrudāma*. *Bhujāṅgavalaya/pādapatra* can be noticed only on the left foot above the ankle besides *pādasaras* on the feet.

At the backside of this icon, *śiraścakra* remains at the bottom of the *makuṭa*. This is beautifully fashioned with thin rim, spokes resembling *yava* grain and festoons hanging the central knob. Evenly combed hairs at the nap of the neck with f of curly tresses of hairs are limited within the necklace at the back. *Kaṭibandha* is shown with horizontal bands. End of *kacca* is not shown. The bows at the end of the *pītāmbara* are well decorated.

**Visnu, Andagudi, Nagapattinam Taluk, Thanjavur District.
Accn. No.109/49**

This icon of Viṣṇu, datable to the 13th–14th Century AD on stylistic features, is in *samapādashānaka* standing stance on a pedestal with two major sections. The square *upapīṭha* consists of the components from bottom to top: *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha* (with the depiction of *pāda* section), *kampa* and *mahāpaṭṭī*. The *padmapīṭha* includes *adhodala*, *ūrdhavadala* and *karnikā* serving as support for foot-plate of the icon which is slightly depressed in the pedestal. The props (*prabhāśanku*), with an additional support beneath, are attached to the *mahāpaṭṭī* as an extension at the prescribed distance. Two rings are present on either side of pedestal at the level of *upāna* and *jagatī* for the processional purpose.



Fig.55. Visnu, Accn. No.109/49

The face is round with prominent eyes and brows especially the lips. The conical *kiriṭa*, measuring the same height of the face, is beautified with a beautiful *makara-purima* in the front, but, because of its smaller size, the horizontal *ratnapaṭṭa* design dominates. *Makara-purimas* in the front of *kiriṭa* and on the sides are small. *Mālā* in *torana* fashion begins from the base of frontal *purima*, runs above the side *purimas* and ends at the base of

back *purima*. *Abhiṣeka* (central part of *maṭṭa*) is designed like *ratnakacita*. The long pearl strings, thin *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) beautify the *abhiṣeka* on the top. The *lalāṭa-paṭṭa* is a little wider. *Karṇapuṣpa*, *karṇapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears.

Of the four hands, the back hands with *kartarimukha* hold *cakra* and proportionately thin *śaṅkha* on the right and left respectively. Both of them have four flames, one on the top, one at the bottom and two on the sides. Tip of the upper flame of *cakra* remain at the level of *pūrva-keśānta* whereas that of *śaṅkha* remains a little lower. The lower right hand bearing *abhaya-mudrā* is exactly positioned but the tips of the middle and index fingers are broken. The lower left hand is *kaṭi-hasta*, the upturned palm placed near the hip. *Skandhamālās* extended to the bottom of the upper arms (*bāhu*), *bāhumālā*, four *vaḷayas* at the wrist, *keyūra* with *ratna-paṭṭa-purima* and *aṅgada* at the crook are the hand ornaments.

A *Kaṇṭhī*, a broad *graiveyaka*, *ratna-hāra*, a *sara* and *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper part of torso. Of the five-stringed *yajñopavīta* with the knot on the left *vakṣastala*, the upper most is *stana-sūtra*, the middle three are *yajñasūtra* and the lower most is *urassūtra* (*pralamba-sūtra*) running into the *kaṭibandha* and *pītāmbara*. *Udarabandha*, three-banded with decorative central part, remains at the level of *hṛdayāvadhi-sūtra*.

The *kaṭibandha* is broad and simple with *kṛtrima-vaktra*. The *pītāmbara* is beautifully done with horizontal lines. The semi-circular loop of the *uttariya* in the front and its sashes beautifully fashioned are harmonious with *ūrudāma*. *Bhujaṅgavalaya/pādapatra* can be noticed only on the left foot above the ankle besides *pādasaras* on the feet.

At the backside of this icon, *śiraścakra* remains at the bottom of the *maṭṭa*. This is beautifully fashioned like a full-blown multi-petaled flower and it has festoons hanging the central knob. Evenly combed hairs at the nap of the neck with five of curly tresses of hairs are limited within the necklace at the back. *Yajñopavīta* has knot also at the back for the attachment of *stana-sūtra*.

Kaṭibandha is shown with horizontal bands. The bows at the end of the *pītāmbara* are well decorated.

A few flaws can be noticed in this icon which is probably due to climatic conditions as well as the quality of metal which could have forced the sculptor not to venture in the high level fine finishing. The head of the icon slightly leans on the right side. The *śaṅkha* is very thin. The fingers of the hands and toes of the legs are not to the standard dimensions. The *kṛtrima-vaktra* on the *kaṭibandha* is a small circle with slightly projected lion's face. Even the mouldings of the pedestal are not finely worked out. All these pose a question regarding the workmanship of the sculptor.



**Fig.56. Visnu, Accn. No.109/49
back view**

Viṣṇu, Tiruvelangadu, Mayiladuturai Taluk, Nagapattinam District, Accn. No.328/55

This icon of Viṣṇu, datable to the 14th Century AD, is one of the icons finely executed both front and back sides. In this, Viṣṇu is depicted standing in *samapādashānaka* fashion on a *padmapīṭha* supported by an *upapīṭha*. The square *upapīṭha* has the components from bottom to top: *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and *mahāpaṭṭī*. The circular *padmapīṭha* consists of *adhodala*, *ūrdhavadala* and *karnikā* for the fixing of the foot-plate of the icon. The props (*prabhāśaniku*), as an extension, are attached to the *mahāpaṭṭī* and *kampa* below. Two rings are present on each side on *jagatī* of *upapīṭha* for the processional reasons.

The face is slightly oval and its features eye-brow, eyes, sharp nose and lips are very fine. In

addition to two rows of *lalāṭa-paṭṭa*, long *kirīṭa-makuṭa* adorns the head. The frontal *makara-purima* is very simple. *Mālā* in *torāṇa* fashion begins from the base of frontal *purima*, runs above the side *purimas* and ends at the base of *purima* at the back. *Abhiṣeka* (central part of *makuṭa*) is designed like *ratnakacita* in cross-bands. The pearl strings, broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) beautify the *makuṭa* on the top. *Karṇapuṣpa* on the top,



Fig.57. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.328/55

karṇapūra in the form of string hanging from the *karṇa-nāla* and attached to the trunk of *makara* and *makara-kunḍalas* on the earlobes beautify the ears.

In this four-armed icon of Viṣṇu, the back hands bear *kartarimukha-mudrā*. In the right hand, the index and middle fingers are broken in the middle; hence, *cakra* is not traceable. *Śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*), in actual shape, is present on the upper left hand. It has four flames, one on the top, one at the bottom and two on the sides. The lower right hand is portrayed in *abhaya-hasta* but slightly leaning outwards. The lower left is *kaṭi-hasta* in which the upturned palm and fingers are aesthetically raised up slightly.

Skandhamālā in the form of full-blown flower adorns the shoulders. *Hāra*-like *bāhu-mālā* is present only on the upper part of right hand whereas *kakṣa-mālā*, like a string, is on the left shoulder. *Keyūras* with *makara-kūṭa* above the elbow, *aṅgada* (three-banded) below the *Keyūra* and *ratva-valayas* at the wrists are the hand ornaments.

The neck with three folds (*kambu-grīva*) is decorated with a beaded *kaṇṭhī*, *grāiveyaka* with *kaustubha* and *ratnahāra*. The prominent *Śrīvatsa* is present on the right bosom. The *yajñopavīta* has the knot almost in the middle of the chest where *stana-sūtra* and *pralamba-sūtra* bifurcate. *Pralamba-sūtra* goes inside the *kaṭibandha* and *pītāmbara*. The *udarabandha* is three-stringed band with frontal part decorated like rows of flower medallions.

The *pītāmbara* with horizontal flips is fashioned in *hastiśuṇḍikā* type with sashes in bows at the ends. *Kaṭibandha* is broad with *kṛtrima-vaktra* in the middle. Double-side-bordered *uttariya* in semi-circular loop in the front and *ūrudāma* beautify the upper part of *pītāmbara*. *Pādasaras* decorate the feet.

At the backside, the *siraścakra* is very unique in its design. The rim of the *cakra* has border both inside and outside and the middle part is designed like stone-studded (*ratna-kacita*). The central knob has three rings supporting fourteen visible spokes imitating the lotus pedals. The festoons hang from the bottom of central ring. Evenly combed hairs and hair-ringlets at the nap are confined within the back part of *hāra* at the backside. Like the front side,

yajñopavīta has knot in the middle of the back where *stana-sūtra* is joined and *pralamba-sūtra* offshoots and runs inside *pītāmbara*. *Kaṭi-bandha* is ornamental with the sashes arranged symmetrical with the *pītāmbara*.



**Fig.58. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.328/55
back view**

Viṣṇu, Kalpattu, South Arcot District, Accn. No.473/62

This icon of Viṣṇu, datable to 10th Century AD, is one of the finely created *utsava-beras* (processional icons) with some unique iconographical features. In this, Viṣṇu is depicted standing in *samapādasthānaka* stance on a circular *padmapīṭha* supported by *upapīṭha*. The components of the square *upapīṭha* from bottom to top are: *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *padma*, *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. The circular *padmapīṭha* consists of *adhodaḷa*, *ūrdhvadaḷa* and *karnikā* as support for the foot-plate of the icon. *Ūrdhvadaḷa* is narrower in width comparable to the description in the *Āgamas* and the same found in other icons of Viṣṇu. The props (*prabhāśaniku*), extended from *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*, are quite tall and they indicate that the *prabhāvalī* must be tall and heavy.



Fig.59. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.473/62

Beautiful *kiriṭa-makuṭa* with proportionately larger *makara-purima* adorns the head. The *kiriṭa-makuṭa* measures less than the size of the face in height. *Ratnapaṭṭa* above *lalāṭa-paṭṭa* is beautifully designed with small floral *purimas*. *Makara-purima* in the front of *kiriṭa* is very large both in height and width. Side *purimas* are small. *Mālā* in *torāṇa* fashion begins from the base, runs above the side *purimas* and ends at the base of *purima* on the back side.

Abhiṣeka (central part of *makūṭa*) is designed like *ratnakacita*. Pearl strings, broad tri-band *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) beautify the *abhiṣeka* on the top.

The face is round with beautiful features especially the lips and nose. *Lalāṭa-paṭṭa* in the form of suspended strings beautifies the forehead in addition to *karnapuṣpa* on top of the ear. The ear-lobes, larger and touching the shoulders, are adorned with *makara-kunḍalas*.

In this four armed icon of Viṣṇu, the upper hands bear *kartarīmukha* slightly turned sidewise. *Cakra* on the right side has six flames. One of the flames on the side is broken. The tip of the upper flame is at the level of *pūrvakeśānta*. Two *jvālās* emerge from the *nābhi* of *cakra* on both sides. The *śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*), present on the upper left hand has four flames, two on sides, one on the top and one at the bottom. The tip of the upper flame is at the level of *bhrū-sūtra*. The flame at the bottom of both *cakra* and *śaṅkha* is unusually designed - the flame comes little forward and rises up. The lower right hand bearing *abhaya-hasta* is slightly raised and hence, the tip of the middle finger remains above the level of *kakṣa-sūtra*. The lower left hand is *ūru-hasta*. Beautifully designed *keyūras* with *makarakūṭa* adorn the front hands. Three *valayas* beautify the wrists of all hands. *Āṅgada* is present only in the front hands at the crook.

A *kañṭhī*, *graiveyaka* with *kaustubha* pendant, a broad *hāra* with *netra-bandha* design and one simple *sara* adorn the upper part of torso in addition to *Śrīvatsa* shown as four-petaled flower. *Skandhamālā* in the form of full-blown flower on the shoulders, a small loop-like *bāhumālā* only on the left arm and a small string-like *kakṣamālā* on the right shoulder are noteworthy in this icon.

The *yajñopavīta* is three stranded and it has a fastening over the left *vakṣasthala*. Both *pralamba-sūtra* going inside the *kaṭibandha* and *pītāmbara* and *stana-sūtra* are designed like beaded string. Of the three threads of *yajñasūtra*, the middle one is beaded string. The *udarabandha* with *ratnapaṭṭa*

design in the front is placed at the level of *hṛdayāvadhi-sūtra*. The fold of flesh between naval and *kaṭibandha* is shown bulging prominently.

The *pitāmbara* is beautifully fashioned in *hastisuṇḍikā* style and the sashes are beautifully portrayed. *Kaṭibandha* is broad with *ratnapaṭṭa* design in the front with two loops hanging from them. Double-side bordered *uttariya* with its semi-circular loop in the front and *ūrudāma* beautify *pitāmbara* designed with horizontal curves as the texture. Unusually, the foot-ornaments (*pāda-bhūṣaṇa*) are not shown in this icon.

At the backside also, the *yajñopavīta* is shown very well with individual *sūtras*. The *śiraścakra* is wider and beautiful. Within the prominent rim twenty-four spokes are visible in addition to festoons (in the form of *koṇṭaippū*) issued from the central knob. The ringlets of hair are seen at the nap of the neck within the limit of the back part of the beaded *hāra*. *Kacca* is shown beautifully with its end in the shape of palm-fan.



**Fig.60. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.473/62
back view**

Viṣṇu, Mangammalpuram, Trichy District, Accn. No.553/66

This small icon of Viṣṇu, datable to 8th-9th Century AD, is unique though it is much corroded. The icon is in *samapādashānaka* standing stance. The circular foot-plate is indicative of circular *padmapīṭha* which is not available.

A long *kirīṭa-makuṭa* adorns the head beautified with *lalāṭapaṭṭa* with prominent frontal *purima*. The *kirīṭa-makuṭa* measures the size of the face in height. *Ratnapaṭṭa* on the top with *padma* and *mukula* are seen but the details of *makuṭa* are corroded. Except the nose and lips, the facial features are slightly visible. *Makara-kunḍala* is on the right ear and the same on the left side is corroded.

Of the four hands, the upper hands bear *kartarīmukha*. As the stretched fingers are broken in the middle, the attributes i.e. *cakra* and *śankha* are not traceable. The tips of the fingers of *abhaya-mudrā* in the lower right hand are broken. The lower left hand is *ūruhasta* with upturned palm. The closeness of the



Fig.61. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.553/66

palm with the thigh, with reference to *Āgamic* injunctions, does not suggest *gadā*. However, the fingers in the upturned palm tend to think of *gadā*. Moreover, there is no indication of placement of *gadā* on the foot-plate matching to the position of the hand. *Skandhamālā* on the shoulders, *keyūras*

above the elbow and two *valayas* at the wrist adorn the hands. *Āṅgada* is seen only on the lower left hand at the crook.

The traces of *kañṭhī* and a broad *grāiveyaka* with *netra-bandha* design are noticeable on the upper part of torso. Due to heavy corrosion, *Śrīvatsa* is not noticeable. A three-stranded *yajñopavīta* with its broad fastening over the left bosom adorns the chest. *Stanaśūtra* is above the broad *udarabandha*. *Yajñasūtra* remains above *kaṭibandha* whereas *urassūtra* (*pralambasūtra*) runs inside the *kaṭibandha* and *pītāmbara*.

Pītāmbara is beautifully fashioned with sashes. The *kaṭibandha* is beautiful but the details of *kṛtrimavaktra* are beyond recognition. The frontal semi-circular loop of *uttariya* and *ūrudāma* beautifies the *pītāmbara*. *Pādasaras* are noticeable on the feet.

At the backside of the icon, the back part of *hāra* is shown almost up to *kaṭśasūtra* behind. The *śiraścakra* is cut or corroded.



**Fig.62. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.553/66
back view**

Viṣṇu, Krishnapuram, Thanjavur District, Accn. No.574/66

This icon of Viṣṇu, highly ornamental and hence, datable to 14th Century AD, is undoubtedly the icon of worship based on the eyeballs carved at the time *netronmilana*. Viṣṇu is depicted in *samapādasthānaka* stance on a circular *padmapīṭha* with *upapīṭha* below. The *upapīṭha* has *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and well-projected *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*; the props (*prabhā-śanku*) are attached to the *ūrdhvapaṭṭī* and *kampa* below. The *padmapīṭha* consist of eight petaled *adhodala* and *ūrdhvala* with provision to fit the foot-plate of the icon. The foot plate is slightly depressed.

The face is round and the eyes, lips and nose are well pronounced. *Lalāṭapaṭṭa* with *puṣpa-mālā* design above beautifies the face in addition to the long *kirīṭa-makuṭa*. *Ratnapaṭṭa* with the design of flower adorn the head above *lalāṭapaṭṭa*. Frontal *makara-purima*

of *makuṭa* is the origin for *latā* which runs above the side *purimas* and ends at the back. *Abhiṣeka* is designed in *ratnakacita* fashion. Pearl strings, *ratnapaṭṭa*,



Fig.63. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.574/66

padma and *kaustubha* adorn the *makuṭa* on the top. *Karṇapuṣpa* and *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears.

In this four-armed icon, the upper hands hold *cakra* and *śaṅkha* on right and left respectively. The tip of the stretched fingers of *kartarīmukha-mudrā* in them is just below *hikkā-sūtra*. However, the tip of the upper flame of the attributes is at the level of *pūrvakeśānta*. The *cakra* has six flames, two on the sides, and one on the top, one at the bottom and two at the *nābhi* on both sides. The *śaṅkha* has four flames, two on the sides, one on the top and one at the bottom. The lower right hand is *abhaya-mudrā* with the tip of the middle finger almost at the level of *stana-cūcuka*. The lower left hand is *ūruhasta* with the palm clinging to the thigh. Two *valayas* at the wrist, *keyūras* with broad *purimas* above the elbow and *aṅgada* below *keyūras* beautify the hands.

Skandhamālā, *bāhumālā* and *kakṣamālā* are present on the upper part of the arm on both sides. *Kaṇṭhī*, a broad *grāiveyaka*, a broad *hāra* and one thin *hāra* are noticeable on the upper part of the torso in addition to triangular-shaped *Śrīvatsa*. *Yajñopavīta* has the fastening on the left *vakṣasthala*; of the four strings, upper one is *stanasūtra* and the lower one, as *pralambsūtra/urassūtra*, goes down the *kaṭibandha* and *pītāmbara*. The middle two strings are *yajñasūtra* extending to the level of mid-belly shown very well as bulged. *Udarabandha* is placed above the naval at the level of *hrdhayāvadhi*.

The *kaṭibandha* is broad with *kṛtrimavaktra*. *Ūrudāma* and the semi-circular loop of *uttariya* with sashes on the sides add beauty to the *pītāmbara* which is simple and well-decorated with horizontal lines. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

At the backside of the icon, a large *śiraścakra* is present with the central knob issuing festoons from the middle. The ringlets of hair are arranged radially within the limit of back part of the *hāra*. *Bāhumālā* and *kakṣamālā* are noticeable also at the back. *Kaṭibandha* and the *kacca* are shown a little below the limit of *pītāmbara* at the top.

Undoubtedly, this icon of Viṣṇu is one of the well-developed one. However, one may notice some minute flaw-like features. The spokes (*ara*) of *cakra* are not uniform. The thickness of forearm of the upper hands is more than that of the front hands. The cutting design of *hāras* is very simple rather more decorative.



Fig.64. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.574/66
back view

Viṣṇu, Krishnapuram, Thanjavur District, Accn. No.569/66

This icon of Viṣṇu in *samapādasthānaka* stance is one of the beautiful and complete ones. The *pīṭha* consists of circular *padmapīṭha* with the components - *adhodala* and *ūrdhvala*. The square *upapīṭha* comprises of *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. Two rings (sockets/*prabhā-suṣira*) are attached on both side at *ūrdhva-paṭṭī* and *jagatī* for insertion of *prabhāvali*.

The benign (*saumya*) face is round with prominent facial features especially the sharp nose and the thin lips. *Lalāṭa-paṭṭa* and the base of *kirīṭa* designed like *puṣpadāma* adorn the forehead. *Kirīṭa-makuṭa* is long and it has a large *makara-purima* in the front and small *purimas* on the sides. *Abhiṣeka* has vertical cross bands and decorated as *ratnakacita*. *Puṣpadāma*, *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* beautify the top of *makuṭa*. *Karṇapuṣpa*, *karṇapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears.



Fig.65. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.569/66

Of the four hands, the upper hands with *kartarimukha-mudrā* hold *cakra* and *śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) respectively on the right and left. The hands are deviated from the body upto *maṇibandha* and the the portion above *maṇibandha* lean towards the shoulder on both sides. The tip of the *kartarimukha* of the right hand is above the *hikkā-sūtra* and that of the left hand is at the level of the *hikkā-sūtra*. The tip of the upper flame of the attributes remains at the level of *bhrū-sūtra*. Both *cakra* and *śaṅkha* have four flames, one on the top, two at the sides, and one at the bottom. The lower right hand bears *abhaya-mudrā* but slightly leaning outwards. The lower left hand is *kaṭihasta*. *Keyūra* with large *makara-purima*, *aṅgada* at the *kūrpara*, *skandhamālās*, *kakṣamālās* on the shoulder and three *ratna-valayas* at the wrist are the embellishments of the hands.

A *Kaṇṭhī* with prominent beads in the front, a broad *grāiveyaka* with *netra-bandha* design, a thin *hāra* with *kaustubha* pendent and *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper torso. *Yajñopavīta* is three-stranded with its fastening at the left bosom. *Stanasūtra* is below the breast level but well above the *udarabandha* designed beautifully



Fig.66. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.569/66
back view

with *ratnapaṭṭa*. *Yajñasūtra* has three threads and it is limited above the *kaṭibandha* whereas *pralambasūtra/urassūtra* goes through the *pītāmbara*.

Pītāmbara is beautiful with horizontal curves and thick ends (*ambarānta*). *Kaṭibandha*, fashioned with *kṛtrimavaktra*, is shown just below the upper edge of *pītāmbara*. The semi-circular loop of *uttariya* and its sashes on the sides add beauty. *Ūrudāman* is shorter. *Nūpuras* above the ankle and *pādasaras* below adorn the feet.

At the back of this icon, *śiraścakra* is placed at the bottom of *kiriṭa*. The central knob bears the spokes and thin rim (little broken) as well as festoons. Evenly combed hair and the ringlets of the hair are limited within the back part of *hāra*. Fastening of *yajñopavīta* is shown at the back also. *Kacca* of *pītāmbara* is naturally shown and the sashes are beautifully placed at sides.

Visnu, Kargudal, South Arcot District, Acc.No. 916/78

This icon of Viṣṇu, in *samapādashānaka* standing stance datable to 12th Century AD, is noteworthy for the stylistic features as well as the theme of the icon. The *upapīṭha* consists of *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. *Padmapīṭha* comprises of *upāna*, *adhodala*, *ūrdhvala* and *karnikā*. *Upāna* is octagonal in consonance with *aṣṭadala-padma* of *adhodala*. Two holes on the *jagatī* part of *upapīṭha* indicate the nature of this icon as *cala-bera* (processional icon).

The face is little oval and adorned with *lalāṭapaṭṭa* above the forehead. The facial features such as the eyebrows, the eyes, the nose and the lips are fashioned very well. *Kirīṭa-makuṭa*, measuring less than the size of the face, is placed exactly on the head with its lower *ratnapaṭṭa* positioned at *pūrvakeśānta*. *Ratnapaṭṭa* has small flower like *purimas*. *Kirīṭa-makuṭa* is decorated with a broad *makara-purima* in the front. *Latā* emerging from the base of *makara-purima* runs above side *purimas* and ends at the back. *Ratnakacita* design of



Fig.67. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.916/78

abhiṣeka is clearly shown in cross bands. Pearl strings, broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* beautify the *kiriṭa*. *Karṇapuṣpa*, *karṇapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears.

In this four-armed icon of Viṣṇu, upper hands bear *kartarīmukha*. In the right hand, stretched fingers of *kartarīmukha* are broken above the first *parva*, hence, *cakra* is not available. *Śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) is present on the left hand. It has four flames, one on the top, one at the bottom and two on the sides. The lower right hand is *abhaya-hasta* with the tip of the middle finger above the breast nut. The lower left hand is *kaṭyavalambita*. Three *ratna-valayas* at the wrist, beautifully decorated *keyūra* just above the crook on the front hands, *aṅgada* at the crooks, *bāhumālā* on the left shoulder and string-like *kakṣamālā* on the right shoulder are the hand



**Fig.68. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.916/78
back view**

ornaments. *Skandhamālā*, designed in the form of full blown flower symmetrical to *makara-kunḍalas*, appears on both shoulders.

On the upper torso, *kañṭhī*, broad *graiveyaka*, *hāra*, a thin *sara* and *Śrīvatsa* are noticeable. *Yajñopavīta* is three-stranded, *stana-sūtra* just below the breast, *yajñasūtra* extending upto the bottom of *kaṭibandha* and *pralambasūtra/urassūtra* running down inside *pītāmbara*. Broad *udarabandha* is placed at the level of *hṛdayāvadhi*.

Pītāmbara is beautiful in *hastīśuṇḍikā* fashion with horizontal lines. The broad *kaṭibandha* designed with *kṛtrimānana*, *ūrudāma*, semi-circular central loop of *uttariya* and its sashes symmetrical on the sides beautify the *pītāmbara*. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

At the back side of the icon, one can notice beautifully designed *śiraścakra* with the festoons emerging from the central knob. The ringlets of hair are shown within the limit of *graiveyaka* shown at the back. *Kacca* of *pītāmbara* is done naturally.

Viṣṇu, Locality Unknown, Accn. No. 14

This icon of Viṣṇu, datable to 18th Century AD, is complete in all details of iconographical features, in addition to a few aspects chosen by the sculptor himself.

In this icon, Viṣṇu is depicted in *samapādashānaka* stance on a typical *padmapīṭha*. The *padmapīṭha* is circular with square *upāna*. Other components from bottom to top are: *kampa*, *adhodala* (*aṣṭadala*), *paṭṭikā* and *karnikā* consisting of *padma*-like moulding with *vājana* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. The *karnikā* is wider suitable for perfect *jaṭibandhana* of the foot-plate. *Kampa* and *paṭṭikā* above *ūrdhvadala* have bead-like design. The *upadala* between the main *dala* of the *adhodala* is designed like beaded string.

The face is little oval with prominent facial features. The nose is little short which has increased

the size of *goji* (space between bottom of nose and upper lip). *Kirīṭa-makuṭa* adorns the head above *lalāṭapaṭṭa*. The base rim of *kirīṭa* with *ratnapaṭṭa* design, *ratnapaṭṭa* above the base rim and small *purima* in the front beautify the crown. At the backside, the base of *kirīṭa* is depicted above the ear level i.e. exactly just



Fig.69. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.14

below the *kapāla*. The *abhiṣeka* (central part of *makuṭa*) is designed like stone-studded. The upper *ratnapaṭṭa*, plain in the middle and beaded on the top and bottom along with *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) beautify the *makuṭa*.

Karṇapuṣpa, *karṇapūra* and curved ear-pendant resembling the style of *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears. *Kaṇṭhī*, *graiveyaka*, *hāra* with pendant and *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper torso. *Stanākṣa* (nipple) and *stana-cūcuka* (breast nut) are shown prominently which gives peculiar appearance on account of their larger size. *Yajñopavīta* has the fastening on the left chest. *Stanasūtra* unusually runs below the breast on both sides and tied at the back. Both *yajñasūtra* and *urassūtra* are symmetrically shown on the both sides of slightly protruding stomach. *Yajñasūtra* which is to be shown in a particular style on both front and back sides is not shown but just as lines at the back. *Udarabandha* has broad frontal design.

Of the four hands, *cakra* and *śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) are held in *kartarimukha* on upper right and left hands respectively. The stretched finger of *kartarimukha* is at just below *hikkā-sūtra*. The tip of the upper flame of the attributes is at the level of *bhrū-sūtra*. Both the attributes have four flames, one on the top, one at the bottom and two on sides. The flames on the sides are typically designed – two bands in the middle, the flame above the band and tassels below the band. The lower right hand is in *abhaya-mudrā* and the lower left in the attitude of *varada-mudrā*. Plain *Skandhamālā*, *bāhumālā*, *kakṣamālā*, one *ratnavalaya* at the wrist, *keyūra* in the form of simple double row beads on the front hands and *keyūra* with small *purima* on the back hands are the hand ornaments.

Pitāmbara, with beautiful thick edges (*ambarānta*), is fashioned like *hastisuṇḍikā* with curves of lines designed like border. *Kaṭisūtra* and *kaṭibandha*, beaded string, small loop of *uttariya* and strings on the thighs and sashes of *uttariya* falling on the sides adds aesthetic view to this icon. Two small garlands consisting of three flowers are noticeable hanging from *kaṭisūtra*. *Nūpura* above the ankle and a large *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

At the back side of this icon, *śiraścakra* is kept at the back not attached to the base of *kirīṭa*. The hair or tresses are not present at the back. Two circular designs are noticeable on the upper part of the back hand. Besides the string of *stanaśūtra* a broad band is present but it does not have any link with the front side.

The religious mark, i.e. the vertical line with a *bindu* at the bottom of the same, tassels of attributes, the features on the chest enable to safely conclude the icon to be of the 18th Century AD.



**Fig.70. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.14
back view**

Viṣṇu, Locality Unknown, Accn. No.26

This icon of Viṣṇu, datable to the 18th Century AD on stylistic features, is in *samapādashānaka* standing stance on a pedestal with two major sections. The square *upapīṭha* consists of the components from bottom to top: *upāna*, *padma*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha* (with the depiction of *pāda* section), *kampa* and *mahāpaṭṭi*; the circular *padmapīṭha* includes *kampa*, *adhodala*, *paṭṭikā* and *ūrdhavadala* with its *karṇikā* serving as support for foot-plate of the icon.

The face is oval with prominent eyes and eyebrows especially the nose and lips. The *lalāṭa-paṭṭa* is a little wider. The *kirīṭa*, measuring more than the height of the face, is beautified with a small *purima* (corroded). *Abhiṣeka* is designed like *ratnakacita*. *Muktādāma* on the top of *abhiṣeka* is long. *Ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* beautify the *makuṭa* on the top. *Karṇapuṣpa* is designed beautifully with full blown flower with a small *mukula* above. *Makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears with their face attached to the *jvālā* of *śaṅkha*



Fig.71. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.26

and *cakra*, probably for the safety reason. *Karṇapūra*, hanging from the base of *karṇapuṣpa*, runs along the ear upto the upper part of *karṇapāśa*, turns towards the attributes and joins with the trunk of *makara*.

Of the four hands, the upper hands with *kartarimukha* hold *cakra* and *śaṅkha* on the right and left respectively. The tip of the stretched fingers of *kartarimukha* is very much below the level of *hikkā-sūtra*. Even then, the tip of the upper flame of *cakra* and *śaṅkha* remain at the level of *pūrva-keśānta*. Both of them have four flames, one on the top, one at the bottom and two on the sides. The lower right hand bears *varada-mudrā* with *maṇibandha* is exactly positioned at the level of naval and tip of fingers at the level of *medhira-sūtra*. The lower left hand is *ūruhasta*, with all fingers are attached to the thigh. *Skandha-mālās*, *bāhumālā*, three *ratnavalayas* at the wrist, one *valaya* in the middle of forearm (*prakoṣṭa-madhya*), *keyūra* and *aṅgada* at the crook are the hand ornaments. *Bāhumālās* are well designed resembling the broad *ratnahāra*. An ornament, resembling *hastapatra*¹ or *pūraka*, is noticeable on the outer side of lower left palm.

A *kañṭhī*, a *ratnahāra*, a beaded *sara*, a *hāra* with pendant and Śrīvatsa adorn the upper part of torso. A broad *udarabandha* remains at the level of *hṛdayāvadhi-sūtra*. *yajñopavīta* is shown in the form of lines rather well projected. *Urassūtra* below the naval is corroded. Two beaded strings of *yajñopavīta* are present below *udarabandha* on both sides and they join at the back giving the impression of *channavīra*.

Pitāmbara is beautifully designed in horizontal curves as intermediate borders which are depicted in diminishing breadth towards the bottom. Flower designs in every part is beautifully executed. *Pitāmbara* is lowered well so that exposing the little protruding belly. *Kaṭibandha* with *kṛtrima-vaktra* is broad. The sashes of *uttariya* on the sides are attached to the hands at elbow from additional support. They are extended till the edge of the garments

¹ Vide. Ornaments in Terminology.

(*ambarānta*). The semi-circular loop of *uttariya* is the front is flanked by *ūrudāma*. Two *nūpurās* above the ankle and *pādasaras* on the feet adorn the legs.

At the backside of this icon, small *śiraścakra* remains below the base of *makuṭa*. The festoons are long. Evenly combed hairs are seen at the nap of the neck, Back part of *hāra*, with pendants, is shown very well at the back. *Channavira* is shown in lines. *Kaṭibandha* and *pītāmbara* are very well decorated. The bows at the end of the *pītāmbara* are well decorated.



Fig.72. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.26
back view

6.2. Āsīna (seated) icons of Viṣṇu

Viṣṇu, Pondichery, Accn. No.97/48.

This icon of Viṣṇu seated in *sukhāsana* posture is one of the icons of the smallest size (3½ inches). Moreover, it is complete in details comprising the principles of *Pāñcarātra Āgamic* tradition. However, the *pīṭha* (pedestal) unusually is simple *vedikāsana* with just *upāna*, *kaṇṭha* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭikā*. The remnant of *prabhāvali* with one flame found attached on the right side of the icon above the *ūrdhvapaṭṭikā* confirms the adherence to *Āgamic* injunctions. Viṣṇu is depicted seated on the *pīṭha*



Fig.73. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.97/48

conveniently with the left leg folded and placed flat on the pedestal. As the icon is positioned a little behind, the right leg is not exactly shown as dangling down but folded and stretched a little forward.

The face is round and the facial expressions can be realised well in spite of heavy corrosion. The *kiriṭa* measures the size of the face. The base of the *kiriṭa* is a broad rim which may be corroded *ratna-paṭṭa*. *Makarapurima* is traceable in front. Due to corrosion, other details are not traceable. A broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* are noticeable on the top of the *kiriṭa*.

In this four-armed icon, the hands require special attention. Upper hands bear *kartarimukha* in which, unusually, the tip of the stretched fingers are raised to the level of lips. Therefore, the tips of the upper flames of *cakra* and *śaṅkha* remain above the level of *uṣṇīṣa* or base of *makarakūṭa* of the *purima* of *kirīṭa*. The *prayoga-cakra* on the upper right hand has thin rim (*nemi*) and wide central part (*ārakūṭa*) with the spokes (*ara*) diminishing in size towards the rim. It has four flames, one on the top, one at the bottom and two issued from the middle (*ārakūṭa*) on both sides. *Śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) has it has four flames, one on the top, one at the bottom and two on the sides. As the upper hands lean towards the shoulders, *cakra* and *śaṅkha* are kept closer to the face. The lower right hand is with *abhaya-mudrā* holds *padma* with the stem between *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī*. *Gadā* is held horizontally in the lower left hand kept on the thigh with the palm downwards. One *valaya* at the wrists and *keyūra* with broad *purima* above the crook are the hand ornaments.

Makara-kunḍalas resting on the shoulders adorn the ears. A *kaṇṭhī* (*upagrīva*) and broad *grāiveyaka* are on the neck and below respectively. *Śrīvatsa* is shown noticeable on the right bosom. The *yajñopavīta* with a broad fastening over the left breast is like wide strip running above the broad *udarabandha*. *Stana-sūtra* and *uras-sūtra* (*pralamba-sūtra*) are not traceable. The *pīṭāmbara* is beautifully fashioned with frills and the spread portion shown on the pedestal. *Kaṭibandha* is broad and *kṛtrima-vaktra* is corroded. The sashes of *uttariya* are seen on the pedestal.

At the back, *śiraścakra* is placed at the level of the eyes. The ringlets of the hair are arranged radially from shoulder to shoulder. The *kaṭivastra* is beautifully fashioned. The sashes of *uttariya* are shown with their ends placed on the pedestal.

The reason behind the perfection of theme of the icon and the simple *vedikāsana*, usually contrary to another, is hard to realise. This icon is datable to 9th Century AD based on some of the features such as the *kirīṭa*, *prayoga-cakra* and absence of flames on the rim of *cakra* in both front and back.



**Fig.74. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.97/48
back view**

Viṣṇu, Tirukkannankudi, Thanjavur District, Accn. No. 459/61

This icon of Viṣṇu is one of the earliest ones following the *Pāñcarātra* prescriptions. In this *kautuka-bera*, Viṣṇu is depicted in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* type of *sukhāśana*. The left leg is folded and placed flat on the *padmapīṭha*. The right leg hanging down is placed on the foot rest i.e. *padmapīṭha*. The rectangular *upapīṭha*, the lower part of the pedestal, is very simple with *upāna* and *jagatī*. The elliptical *padmapīṭha* consists of eight-petaled *adhodala* and *ūrdhavadala*. In the *pādapīṭha* attached to *adhodala* of *padmapīṭha*, *ūrdhavadala* is slightly larger than the size of the foot and *adhodala* is wider and supported by a stem below. The props (*prabhāśaṅku*) are slightly extended from the side of *jagatī*.



Fig.75. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.459/61

The face is round with double chin. The facial features are well pronounced. *Kirīṭa-makuṭa*, measuring almost the size of the face is fit exactly at *pūrvakeśānta*; hence, *ratnapaṭṭa* at the bottom of *kirīṭa* makes the *lalāṭa* narrower. One large *purima* and two smaller *purimas* are present on the front and sides of the *kirīṭa*. *Latā* (creeper-like design) beginning from the bottom of frontal *purimas* runs above the side *purimas* and culminates at the bottom of back *purima*. The *abhiṣeka* (middle part of crown) has vertical bands but the

details are corroded. The *ratnapaṭṭa* above *abhiṣeka* supports *padma* and proportionately larger *kaustubha* (*mukula*).

Cakra and *śaṅkha* are held in the upper hands on the right and left respectively. It is not exactly *kartarīmukha* but the pair of *tarjanī* and *aṅguṣṭha* holding the attributes. As the stretched *tarjanī* is at the level of chin, the tip of the upper flame of them is raised almost to the middle part of the crown. *Cakra* (with twelve spokes) has six flames, one on the top, two at sides, two at the front and back *nābhi* and one at the bottom. *Śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) has two flames on the sides and one on the top typically turned towards inside. The lower right hand with *kaṭaka-mudrā/siṃhakarṇa* holds the stem of *padma* with a bud over. The stem is long and touches the right knee. The lower left hand with *pallava-mudrā*, placed just above the thigh, holds *gadā* horizontally in the middle of the handle with the bulbous end facing outwards. Two *valayas* at the wrist and *keyūras* with *makara-purimas* above the crook adorn the hands. Division of the hands from the *bāhumūla* is well-visible in this icon.

Large *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears and hence, shift the position of *yajñopavīta* almost to the end of the shoulder. This has the fastening above the left *kakṣa* from where the *pralambasūtralurassūtra* hangs down the *kaṭibandha* and its end can be noticed above the shank of the folded leg. The broad *yajñasūtra* runs up to the level of naval. *Stanasūtra* is not seen at all. *Uttariya*, as a thin and broad strip, is shown beneath the course of *Yajñopavīta* on both sides. A *kañṭhī* and *graiveyaka* and a beautiful *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper torso. A broad triband *udarabandha* is placed well above the naval. The stomach is slightly protruding. *Vanamālā* (*Vaijayantī*), a unique feature of Viṣṇu, is shown very well at the fold of elbow of the back hand. Its back part rests on the *padmapīṭha* behind. In the front side, it runs on the outside of the front hands and its frontal ends culminate at *kaustubha* almost at the bottom of the *ūrdhavadala* of *padmapīṭha*. The position of *kaustubha* on the left side rather in the centre indicates the attitude of wearing casually. That is why, obviously, this icon has no *hāra* which is supposed to hold *kaustubha* pendant. *Pitāmbara* is

well designed with horizontal lines and thick borders (*ambarānta*). *Kaṭibandha* has the knotted loop in the front. *Pādasaras* adorn the leg.

At the back side, the *śiraścakra* is beautifully fashioned and kept at the back of the *kirīṭa*. However, the festoons generally noticeable in the icons are not present. The hair is arranged in ringlets radially in two steps at the back. The ends of the *kaṭivastra* are placed at sides on the *padmapīṭha*.

The size of the icon confirms this to be a *kautuka-bera*. As per the rules of the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* that *kautuka-bera* must be in seated posture when the *dhruva-bera* is in seated or reclining position,¹ this icon must be belonging to a temple with the *dhruva-bera* in seated or reclining posture but not standing one. Based on some of the special features such as *yajñopavīta*, the attributes, *Vanamālā* and the *padmapīṭha*, this *mūrti* is ascribed to Pallava period, and, therefore, datable to the 8th Century AD.



**Fig.76. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.459/61
back view**

¹ Vide. Types of icons.

Viṣṇu, Mangammalpuram, Trichy District, Accn. No. 554/66

This icon of seated Viṣṇu, created based on the *Pāñcarātra* injunctions, is undoubtedly a *kautuka-bera*, retaining all the details although datable to 8th century AD.

Viṣṇu is depicted in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* type of *sukhāśana* with the left leg folded and placed flat on the *padmapīṭha*. The right leg thrown down and is placed on the foot-rest i.e. *padmapīṭha*. The rectangular *upapīṭha* consists of *upāna* and *jagatī*. The elliptical *padmapīṭha* has eight petaled *adhodala* and *ūrdhavadala*. The *pādapīṭha* is at the base attached to *adhodala* of *padmapīṭha*. Its *ūrdhavadala* is almost suitable to the foot in size and the *adhodala* is proportionate to *ūrdhavadala*. The lotus petals in both *padmapīṭha* and *pādapīṭha* are very prominent with

upadala. The props (*prabhāśaṅku*) are on the projected part from *ūrdhavadala*. A beautiful *prabhāvalī* is inserted on the props. The *prabhāvalī* has three *yaṣṭis* (divisional stems), the middle one is very broader. There is one *jvālā* on the top pointing upwards flanked by seven *jvālās* on the right side in *dakṣiṇāvarta* mode and six *jvālās* on the left side in *vāmāvarta* mode.

The face is round with double chin. The facial features especially the eyes and the lips are well pronounced. The *kiriṭa-makuṭa*, measuring slightly more than the size of the face, is positioned at *pūrvakeśānta* with its lower *ratnapaṭṭa* forming beautiful curve over the *lalāṭa* fits exactly. The *makrakūṭa*



Fig.77. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.554/66

attached to *ratnapaṭṭa* functions as the base of *patra-purimas* in the front side of the *kirīṭa*. Two smaller *purimas* are present on the sides of the *kirīṭa*. A prominent *latā* (creeper-like design) beginning from the bottom of frontal *purima* runs above the side *purimas* and culminates at the bottom of back *purima*. The *abhiṣeka* (middle part of crown) has vertical bands with stone-studded design. Beautiful *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and proportionately larger *kaustubha* (*mukula*) in the form of little blown lotus beautify the *kirīṭa* on the top.

The *makara-kunḍalas* adorning the earlobes are larger forcing the *yajñopavīta* to move to almost to the end of the shoulder. The fastening of the *yajñopavīta* above the left *kakṣa* is designed in three beaded section. The *pralambasūtra/urassūtra*, in the form of braided string commences between the middle and lower beads, runs inside *kaṭibandha* and comes out appearing above the shank (*jaṅghā*) of the folded leg. The broad *Yajñasūtra*, in three beaded strings runs up to the level of naval. *Stanasūtra* is not seen at all. *Uttariya*, as a thin and broad strip, is shown beneath the course of *yajñopavīta* on both sides. A broad *makara-kaṇṭhī* just below the *kambugrīva*, a thin *grāiveyaka* and a beautiful *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper torso. A broad triband stone-studded *udarabandha* is placed well above the naval. *Vanamālā* (*Vaijayanti*), a unique feature of Viṣṇu, is shown very well at the fold of elbow of the back hand. Its back part with a beautiful pendant rests on the *padmapīṭha* behind. In the front side, it runs on the outside of the front hands and runs over the thighs with its frontal ends culminating at *kaustubha* on the *padmapīṭha* exactly in the middle.

The upper right and left hands hold respectively *cakra* and *śaṅkha* in the pair of *tarjanī* and *aṅguṣṭha*. The stretched *tarjanī* is at the level of chin, the tip of the upper flame of them is raised almost to *uṣṇīṣānta*. *Cakra* (with twelve spokes) has four flames, one on the top, two at sides, and one at the bottom. *Śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) has two flames on the sides and one on the top. The lower right hand with *kaṭaka-mudrā/simhakarṇa* holds the stem of *padma* with few open petals and a bud over; the stem is long and touches the right knee.

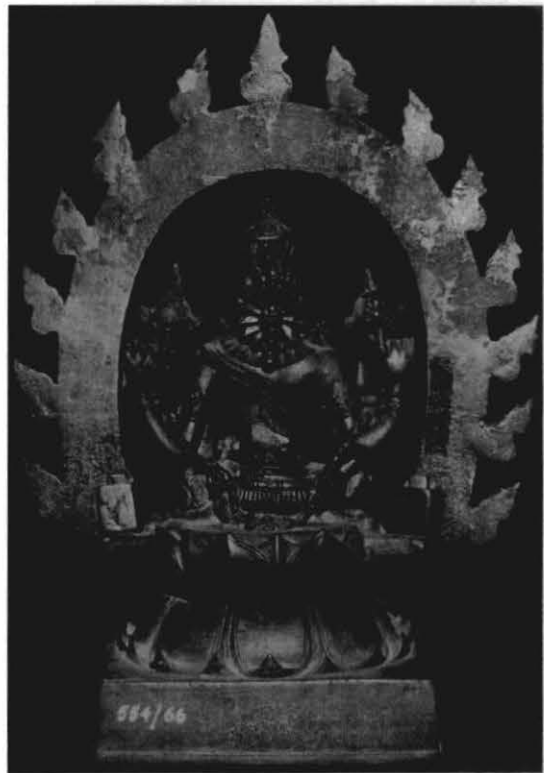
The lower left hand with *pallava-mudrā*, placed just above the thigh, holds *gadā* horizontally in the middle of the handle with the bulbous end facing outwards. Two *valayas* at the wrist and *keyūras* with *makara-kūṭa* and *patra-purimas* above the crook adorn the hands.

Pitāmbara is well designed with horizontal lines and thick borders (*ambarānta*). *Kaṭibandha* has the knotted loop in the front. *Pādasaras* adorn the leg.

At the back side, *śiraścakra* is beautifully fashioned in the form of multi-spokes and kept at the back of the *kirīṭa*. The central knob with the lion face is the origin of festoons. The hair is arranged in ringlets radially at the back. The ends of the *kaṭi-vastra* are placed at sides on the *padmapīṭha*.

According to the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, *kautuka-bera* must be in seated (*āsina*) stance when the *dhruva-bera* is *āsina* or reclining (*śayāna*),¹ this icon must belong to a temple with the *dhruva-bera* in seated or reclining posture but not in standing stance.

Based on some of the special features such as *yajñopavīta*, *uttariya*, attributes, upper hands, *Vanamāla* and the *padmapīṭha*, this icon is datable to the 8th Century AD.



**Fig.78. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.554/66
back view**

¹ Vide. Types of icons

Viṣṇu, Locality unknown, Accn. No.17

This icon of Viṣṇu in *sukhāsana* sitting posture is one of the earliest master-pieces, datable to 8th Century AD, created according to the injunctions on *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. The left leg is folded and placed flat on the *padma-pīṭha* (pedestal) while another leg dangles down almost straight and the foot is firmly placed on the small *padma-pīṭha* serving as footrest. The footrest (*padma-pīṭha*) is elliptical fitting to the length of the foot and is attached to lower part of *adhodala*.



Fig.79. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.17

Normally, the hanging leg, according to the prescriptions, is supposed to be slightly cross towards inside close to *purassūtra* (*brahmasūtra*/middle plumb-line) vertically passing exactly in the middle touching the mid part of *mukula* (*śikhā-maṇi*), tip of the nose, *nābhi* and middle of *medhra*. The *padma-pīṭha* measures one third of the icon from top to toe. It consists of eight-petalled *adhodala* and *ūrdhvadala*. The *padmapīṭha* is placed on a simple *upapīṭha* consisting of *upāna*, *kaṇṭha* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭikā*. Two props (*śaṅku*) are fixed on the *ūrdhvapaṭṭi* for fixing *prabhāvali*.

The upper pair of hands with *kartarīmukha* holds *cakra* and *śaṅkha* on right and left respectively slightly leaning towards the face which is an early feature. The stretched fingers of *kartarīmukha* are well open and the attributes are inserted well. *Cakra* has six flames, one on the top, one at the bottom, two on the sides and two on both sides of *nābhi*. *Śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) has five flames, one on the top, one in the front, one at the back and two on the sides.

The lower right hand with *pallava-mudrā* in upturned position, raised to the level of *nābhi-sūtra*, has corroded traces of *padma* in the palm. The lower left hand with *pallava-mudrā*, remaining below the *nābhi-sūtra*, holds in the palm the handle of *gadā* placed horizontally with its bulbous end outwards. Three *valayas* at the wrists, *keyūras* with large *makarapurima* above the crook, *skandhamālā* on the upper part of *bāhu* (*bāhu-mūla*) and *kakṣamālās* adorn all the hands. Presence of *kakṣamālā* on the backside of the upper hands is a unique aspect.

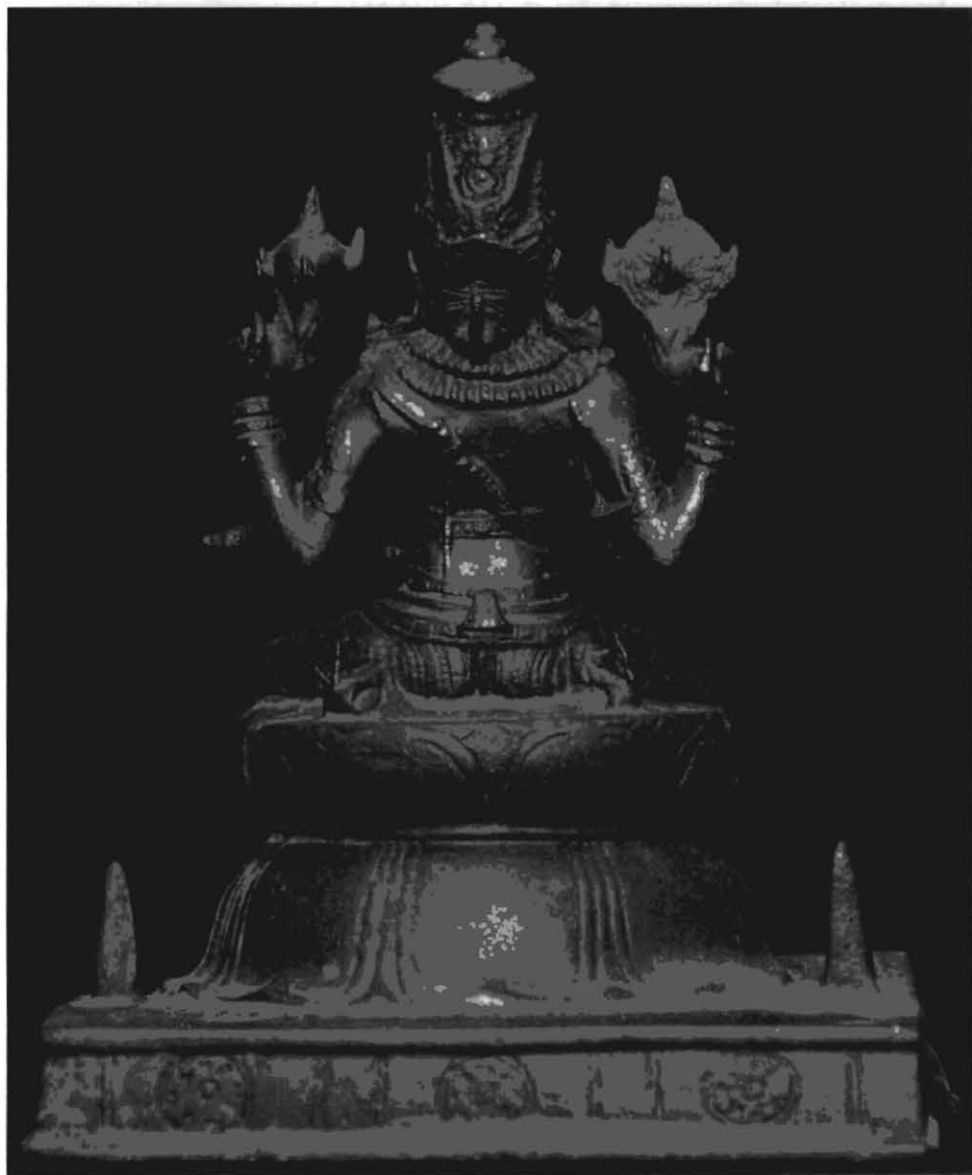
The *kirīṭā* has the height of the face with thick lips and wide eyes. It has broad *makarapurimas* on all the four sides in addition to *latā-toraṇa* design. The broad *ratnapaṭṭa* below the *kirīṭa* has made the forehead narrower. The thin earlobes are adorned with large *makara-kunḍalas*.¹ A *kañṭhī* (*upagrīva*) and a broad *hāra* beautify the upper part of the chest in addition to *Śrīvatsa* (slightly corroded). Broad *yajñopavīta* has the fastening almost at the middle of the chest at the level of *stana-cūcuka*. *Yajñasūtra* remains above the naval but just below the broad *udarabandha*. *Stana-sūtra* is absent. The *pralambasūtra* offshoots from the fastening, goes inside the garment and once again appears on the ankle of the folded left leg.

Pitāmbara is beautifully fashioned with folds in very natural way with a simple *kaṭibandha* and *uttariya*. Central foldings/frills of *pītāmbara* remain below the folded leg and appear like *āstarāṇa* (covering sheet) on the *padmapīṭha*. The loops/tassels of *uttariya* are shown hanging on the side of *padmapīṭha*. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

What is fascinating at the back is the unique depiction of hair tresses radially arranged in two rows. *Śiraścakra* is octagonal like the spokes. Like the front side, *yajñasūtra* has fastening also at the back side from where the

¹ This size of the *makara-kunḍalas* can be noticed in the *utsava-bera* of Viṣṇu at Tentirupper (near Tirunelveli) who is known in this place as *Makara-netuṅkūlaikkāṭaṇ* (possessor or large *makara-kunḍalas*).

pralambasūtra bifurcates and hangs. The sashes of the *uttariya* are placed at the back on the *pādma-piṭha* on which he is seated and its ends flow down at sides.



**Fig.80. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.17
back view**

Viṣṇu, Virudhunagar, Accn. No.5/01

This *kautuka-bera* of Viṣṇu, one of the earliest, datable to 8th Century AD, adhering to the prescriptions of the *Pāñcarātra* tradition, is unique though corroded because of much use in the temple. Viṣṇu is depicted in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* type of *sukhāśana*. The left leg is folded and placed flat on the *karnikā* of *padmapīṭha*. The right leg hangs down with its back foot placed on the *adhodala* of elliptical *padmapīṭha* consisting of *kampa*, eight-petaled *adhodala*, *ūrdhvadala* and *karnikā* supporting the base-plate of the icon. The rectangular *upapīṭha* consists of *upāna*, *padma*, *kampa*, *kañṭha*, *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭi*.

The face is little oval with double chin. The facial features are not clear due to much usage like daily ceremonial bath (*abhiṣeka*).

Kirīṭa-makuṭa, measuring half times larger than the size of the face is fit exactly at the bottom of *uṣṇīṣa*. Hence, the *purimas* in the front and sides placed on *ratnapaṭṭa* are well projected. One large *purima* and two smaller *purimas* are present on the front and sides of the *kirīṭa*. *Latā* (creeper-like design) beginning from the bottom of frontal *purima* runs above the side *purimas* and culminates at the bottom of back *purima*. The details of *abhiṣeka* (middle part of crown) have corroded. The *ratnapaṭṭa* above *abhiṣeka* supports *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*).

Of the four hands, the upper hands leaning towards the body hold *cakra* and *śankha* on the right and left respectively, in the pair of *tarjanī* and *aṅguṣṭha*.



Fig.81. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.5/01

The stretched *tarjanī* of the upper right hand is at the level of *hikkā-sūtra*; hence, the tip of the upper flame of *cakra* is raised to the level of *bhrū-sūtra*. On the upper left hand, the stretched *tarjanī* is very much below *hikkā-sūtra*, hence, the tip of the upper flame of *śaṅkha* remains at the level equal to mid-nose. *Cakra* (with twelve spokes and prominent rim) has four flames, one on the top, two on the sides and one at the bottom. *Śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) has two flames on the sides and one on the top. The lower right hand with *śiṃhakarṇa-mudrā* holds the stem of *padma* with a bud over; the stem is long and touches the right knee. The lower left hand with *pallava-mudrā*, placed on the thigh, holds the other end of *gadā* horizontally with the bulbous end facing outwards. Two *ratna-valayas* at the wrist and three-stringed *keyūras* with *makara-purimas* above the crook adorn the hands. Bifurcation of the hands from the *bāhumūla* is well visible in this icon in the front side also.

Large *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears. The position of *yajñopavīta* remains almost at the end of the shoulder. The fastening above the left *kakṣa* is faded from where the *pralambasūtra/urassūtra* hangs down the *kaṭibandha* and its end can be noticed above the shank of the folded leg. The broad *yajñasūtra* runs up to *kaṭibandha*. *Stanasūtra* is not seen at all. *Uttariya*, as a thin and broad strip, is shown beneath the course of *yajñopavīta* on both sides. Below the *kambugrīva*, a *kaṇṭhī* and *grāiveyaka* and a beaded *hāra* adorn the upper torso. *Śrīvatsa* is faintly visible in the form of seated Lakṣmī. A broad triband *udarabandha* is placed well above the naval. The stomach is slightly protruding.

Pītāmbara is well designed with horizontal lines and thick borders (*ambarānta*). *Kaṭibandha* has the knotted loop in the front. The semi-circular loop of *uttariya* is noticeable above the foot of the folded left leg. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

At the back side, the *śiraścakra* is beautifully fashioned like multi-spoked ornament and kept at the back of the *kirīṭa*. However, the festoons generally noticeable in the icons are not present. The hair is arranged in ringlets radially in two steps at the back. The *kacca* of *pītāmbara* is shown

beautifully. *Uttariya* and *kaṭibandha* are shown individually. The ends of the *kaṭivastra* and the loops are placed at the back side of the icon on the *padmapīṭha*.



**Fig.82. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.5/01
back view**

Viṣṇu, Mangammalpuram, Trichy District, Accn. No. 555/66

This *kautuka-bera* of seated Viṣṇu, is a creation based on the *Pāñcarātra* injunctions confirmed by the four attributes i.e. *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *gadā* and *padma*.

Viṣṇu is depicted in *sukhāsana* with the left leg folded and placed flat on the *padmapīṭha*. The right leg thrown down and is placed on the *pādapīṭha* i.e. *padmapīṭha*. The elliptical *padmapīṭha*, a separate pedestal placed and fit on the socket of *upapīṭha*, has prominent eight petaled *adhodala* and *ūrdhavadala*. The *pādapīṭha* is attached to the base of *adhodala* of *padmapīṭha*; and, its *ūrdhavadala*, fitting to the size of the foot, and *adhodala* are equal in height and projection. The rectangular *upapīṭha* consists of *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*,



Fig.83. Viṣṇu, Accn. No. 555/66

kañṭha, *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī* with provision of socket for fixing of *padmapīṭha*. The props (*prabhāśanku*) are present on the *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. A beautiful elliptical *prabhāvali* is inserted on the props. The *prabhāvali* has seven *yaṣṭis* (divisional stems), in which the middle one is very broader. There is one *jvālā* on the top pointing upwards flanked by nine *jvālās* on both sides, in *dakṣiṇāvarta* mode on the right side and *vāmāvarta* mode on the left side. The *jvālā*, second from the bottom on the right side, is broken.

The face is round with double chin. The facial features especially the eyes, nose and the lips are well pronounced. The *kirīṭa-makuṭa*, measuring slightly more than the size of the face is at *pūrvakeśānta* with its lower

ratnapaṭṭa possessing a small *purima* exactly on the top of *lalāṭa-madhya* on it resembling *cūḍāmaṇi*. The *makrakūṭa* on the *makuṭa* is the base of *puṣpapurima* in the front side of the *kirīṭa*. Two smaller *purimas* are present on the sides of the *kirīṭa*. A prominent *latā* (creeper-like design) beginning from the mouth of *makra* of frontal *purima* runs above the side *purimas* and culminates at the bottom of back *purima*. The *abhiṣeka* (middle part of crown) has vertical bands with stone-studded design. A beautiful *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) in the form of little blown lotus beautify the *kirīṭa* on the top.

The *makara-kunḍalas* adorning the small ears are larger forcing the *yajñopavīta* to move little away on the shoulder. Short *skandhamālās* are present on the shoulders. A *kañṭhī* just below the *kambugrīva*, a broad *grāiveyaka*, a stringed *hāra* and a beautiful Śrīvatsa adorn the upper torso. The fastening of the *yajñopavīta* above the left *kakṣa* is designed in three beaded section. The *pralambasūtra/urassūtra*, in the form of braided string, runs inside *kaṭibandha* and comes out appearing above the shank (*jaṅghā*) of the folded leg. The broad *Yajñasūtra*, in three beaded strings runs up to the level of naval. *Stanasūtra* in the form of braided string is up the broad triband stone-studded *udarabandha* placed well above the naval.

In this four armed icon of Viṣṇu, the upper right and left hands hold respectively *cakra* and *śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta*) in the pair of *tarjanī* and *aṅguṣṭha*. The stretched *tarjanī* is at the level of *hikkā-sūtra* and the tip of the upper flame of *cakra* and *śaṅkha* remains at the level of *netra-sūtra*. *Cakra* has twelve spokes, beautifully designed *nemi* (rim) and a wide *nābhi*. Both *cakra* and *śaṅkha* have four flames, one on the top, two at sides, and one at the bottom. The lower right hand with *kaṭaka-mudrā/siṃhakarṇa* holds the stem of *padma* with few open petals and a bud over. Its stem is long and touches the right knee. The lower left hand with *kaṭaka-mudrā*, at the level of *nābhi-sūtra* holds the tip of the handle of *gadā* which has the bulbous end placed at the bottom of *adhodala* of *padmapīṭha*. *Gadā* has the size of five *tāla* with reference to the

icon. Three *valayas* at the wrist and triband *keyūra* with *patra-purimas* above the crook adorn the hands. Bifurcation of the arms from *bāhumūla* is noticeable also in the front side.

Pītāmbara is well designed with horizontal lines and thick borders (*ambarānta*). *Kaṭibandha* has the knotted loop in the front. The semi-circular loop of *uttariya* is noticeable on the lap. The sashes of *uttariya* are seen on the sides. *Nūpurās* adorn the leg at the ankles.

At the back side, the *śiraścakra* is beautifully fashioned in the form of full blown flower and kept at the back of the *kirīṭa*. A petal in the middle at the bottom is extended as festoon from the rim of the central knob. The hair is arranged radially in ringlets in two steps at the back. Three strings of *yajñopavīta*, *stana-sūtra* and *urassūtra* are shown very well as independent. The end of *kacca* is shown coming out in



**Fig.84. Viṣṇu, Accn. No. 555/66
back view**

large size. *Uttariya*, *kaṭibandha* and *katisūtra* are shown separately. The ends of the *uttariya*, as loops and spreads, are placed at sides on the *padmapīṭha*.

This *kautukabera*, supposed to be of the temple with *dhruvabera* in seated (*āsina*) or reclining (*śayāna*) stance, is datable to the 8th Century AD, based on some of the special features such as *yajñopavīta*, attributes, upper hands and the *padmapīṭha*.

**Viṣṇu, Cheranmahadevi, Ambasamudram Taluk, Tirunelveli District,
Accn. No.20**

This icon of Viṣṇu, one of the best specimens of later Pāndyan School of art, is complete in all features following the prescription of *Vaikhānasa āgama*.

Viṣṇu is depicted in *sukhāsana* stance on a rectangular *pīṭha* (pedestal). However, the erect torso and the position of the right leg is indication of *virasthānaka* attitude.¹ The left leg is folded and placed on the pedestal by which the *nalaka* of the ankle remains exactly at the middle plumb-line; and, the right leg hangs down and it is placed on simple *pādapiṭha*, which has *padmapīṭha* design but without the carving of lotus petals. The rectangular *pīṭha*, a typical *bhadrapīṭha*,¹ consists of *upāna*,



Fig.85. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.20

jagatī, *vṛttakumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha* (with *pāda* design) and *ūrdhvapaṭṭikā*. There are two rings provided at the lower part of *jagatī* on both sides for the processional purpose. Two thick and broad props (*prabhāsaṅku*) are attached to the *ūrdhvapaṭṭī* of the pedestal. A recessed strip (*paṭṭikā*) above the *ūrdhvapaṭṭī* functions as the base of base-plate of this seated icon.

Face is a little oval with sharp nose and other facial features. *Goji* (space between the upper lip and base of the nose) is wider. The conical *kirīṭa-makuṭa* adorning the head has beautiful *ratnapaṭṭa*. However, *makarapurima* in the front, *latā* design commencing from the bottom of *makarapurima* and running

¹ *Kāśyapa śilpasāstra*. 50.32b-35a. This text mentions *ghṛtavāri* (depth for flow of water), as a topmost component. However, this component is not applicable for metal icons.

above the side *purimas* are not carved as high level projection. *Abhiṣeka* (middle part of the crown) has *ratnakacita* design. The upper *ratnapaṭṭa* with pearl strings (*muktādāma*) below, and *padma* and *kaustubha* above adorn the top of the *kiriṭa-makuṭa*. The ears are beautified with *karnapuṣpa*, *karnapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* with their tail entering into the earlobe from behind.

Of the four hands, the upper ones bear *kartarīmukha* facing sideways. Upto the wrist, the hands are kept away from the shoulder but the *kartarīmukha* leans towards the body. *Cakra* on the upper right hand is well-designed *nābhi* with three rings, the *aras* (spokes) designed like lotus petals and *nemi* (rim) with two rings. It has six *jvālās*, one on the top, one at the bottom, two on the sides and one on both side of the *nābhi*. *Śaṅkha* (*dakṣṇāvarta*) on the upper left hand has five flames, one on the top, one at the bottom, two on the sides and one at the back. The lower right hand is *abhaya-hasta* with the tip of the middle finger positioned at the level of *stanacūcuka*. The lower left hand bears *simhakarṇa/āhāyavarada-mudrā* with the lower part of the palm lowered to the level *kaṭibandha*. Three *valayas* at the wrist and *keyūra* with elaborate *purima* adorn the hands in addition to *skandhamālā*, *bāhumālā* (*hāra*-type) and *kakṣamālā* on both sides of the both shoulders.

A beaded *kañṭhī* below the *kambugrīva*, a broad *graiveyaka* and belled *hāra* and *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper torso. The five-stringed *yajñopavīta* is three-stranded with the fastening at the middle of the chest. *Stansūtra* is at the level of the lower part of the chest and the *pralambasūtra* (*urassūtra*) goes down the *kaṭibandha* and *pītāmbara*. *Udarabandha* is two-banded with pearl strings hanging below.

Pītāmbara is well designed with horizontal lines and floral designs alternatively. The central part of *pītāmbara* folded and placed below the left leg and spread below offers an appearance as if seated on *āstarāṇa* (spread cloth). *Kaṭisūtra* and *kaṭibandha* with *kṛtrimavaktra* and sashes of *uttariya* hanging on the sides beautify the icon. It is hard to realise that the *jaṭibandhana* has taken

place just beneath the garments. Two *pādavalayas* at the ankle and *kiṅkiṇī* (belled *pādasaras*) adorn the feet.

At the back side, *śiraścakra* is placed exactly at eyelevel. It has the design six lotus petals (inverted lotus) with the central knob issuing tassels. Well combed hair at the nap and the ringlets below are arranged radially. A prominent fan-like *kacca* is visible above the *kaṭibandha* and *uttariya*. This icon, with its size and the rings on *jagatī* for processional reasons, clearly indicate the function of *utsava-bera*. This seated icon, supposed to be of the temple with *dhruva-bera* in seated reclining stance, is datable to the middle of the 13th century AD, based on the iconographical features such as *skandamāla*, *bāhumāla*, *kakṣamāla* and attributes.



**Fig.86. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.20
back view**

Viṣṇu, Tiruvelangadu, Mayiladuturai Taluk, Nagapattinam District, Accn. No.321/54

This icon of Viṣṇu is in *sukhāsana* seated stance, with left leg folded and placed horizontally and the right leg hanging down. The *upapīṭha* consists of *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa* and *ūrdvapaṭṭikā*. The semi-circular *padmapīṭha* comprises of *adhodala* and *ūrdhvadala*. *Padmapīṭha* is in semi-circular form in order to position the seated icon for the convenient depiction of the hanging leg. *Ūrdhvadala* has the height of half of *adhodala* and it is beautifully depicted with the lotus petals and *upacchada* (short intermediate petals). Two projections on both sides one attached to the *ūrdhvapaṭṭī* and another to *kumuda* are *prabhāsuṣira* (socket).

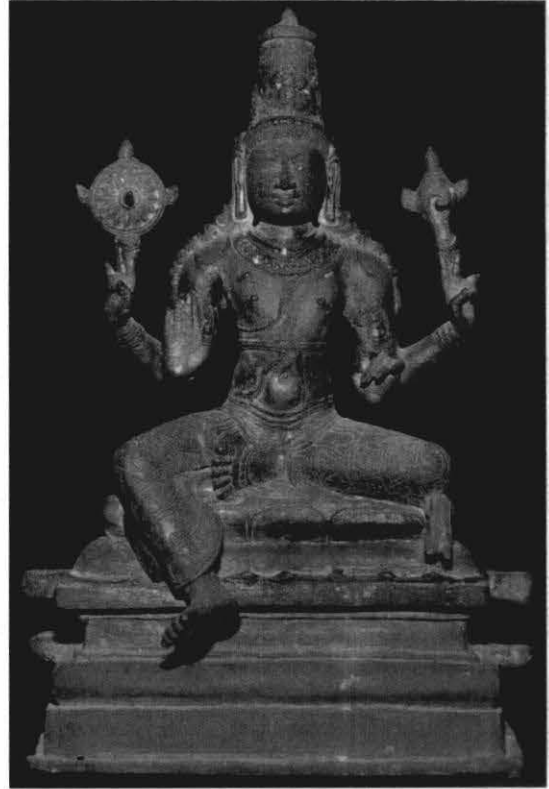


Fig.87. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.321/54

The face is round with beautiful facial features. A long *kirīṭa-makuṭa* adorns the head above the *lalāṭapaṭṭa*. A large *makarapurima* above the *ratnapaṭṭa*, two *purimas* on the sides, one small *purima* at the back and *ratnamālā*, beginning from the bottom of frontal *makara* and ending below the *purima* at the back, beautify the *kirīṭa*. The middle part of the crown vertical bands with stone-studded design. The broad *ratnapaṭṭa* with pearl strings below and *padma* and *kaustubha* on top adorn the upper part of *kirīṭa*. *Kaṇapūṣpa*, *karnapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* are on the ears.

In this four armed icon, the upper hands hold *cakra* and *dakṣiṇāvarta śaṅkha* on the right and left hands respectively. Although the tip of the

stretched fingers of *kartarimukha-hasta* remains at the level of *hikkā-sūtra*, the tip of the upper flame of the attributes remain at the level of *pūrvakeśānta*. *Cakra*, designed with sixteen spokes, has six flames, one on the top, two on the sides, one at the bottom and two on both sides of *nābhi*. *Śaṅkha* has four flames, one on the top, two on the sides and one at the bottom. The lower flame of both *cakra* and *śaṅkha* are turned outward. The lower right hand is *abhaya-hasta*, with *maṇibandha* above the naval. The left hand bears *āhūya-varada/sinhakarṇa-mudrā*, with *karatala-madhya* (mid-palm) below the naval. Three *ratnavalayas* at the wrist, *keyūra* with large *makarapurima* above the elbow, one *valaya* at the crook of back left hand, *skandhamālā* on both shoulders, *hāra*-type *bāhumālā* on the front right shoulder and a string-like *bāhumālā* on the front left shoulder are the embellishments of the hands.

A *kaṇṭhi*, a broad *grāiveyaka*, a stringed *hāra* and *Śrīvatsa* are seen as ornaments on the upper torso. *Yajñopavīta* is three-stranded with its fastening in the mid-chest above the level of *stancūcuka*. *Stanasūtra*, the top strand below the breast level, goes behind while the lower strand, i.e. *urassūtra/pralambasūtra* goes into the *kaṭibandha*. *Yajñasūtra* is up to the level of *kaṭibandha*. The stomach portion between *urassūtra* and *yajñasūtra* is slightly protruding.

Pitāmbara is beautiful with divisions of floral design bordered with horizontal lines. The *kaṭibandha* is natural. The semi-circular loop of *uttariya* on the lap is flanked with *ūrudāma* on the sides. The ends of *uttariya* are shown on the *padmapīṭha*. *Pādajālas* adorn the feet.

At the back of the icon, *śiraścakra* is beautiful with number of spokes and tassels from the central knob. Hair is well combed and arranged in ringlets radially within the limit of the back part of necklace. *Urassūtra* and *pralambasūtra* are not noticeable. *Pitāmbara* is well-designed at the upper part of *kacca*. The sashes of the *kaṭi-vastra* are beautiful. This *kautuka-bera*, based on iconographic features, is datable to about 13th Century AD.

Viṣṇu, Tirumarugal, Nagapattinam District, Accn. No.1888/96

This icon of Viṣṇu, datable to 12th Century AD, is in *sukhāsana* seated posture on elliptical *padmapīṭha* consisting of *upāna*, *adhodala*, *ūrdhvadala* and *karṇikā*. The *ūrdhvadala* is semi-elliptical to accommodate the seated posture with one of the legs thrown down. The left leg is folded and placed flat on the pedestal and the right one hangs down.



Fig.88. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.1888/96

Of the four hands, the upper hands, bearing *kartarī-mukha* with the palm facing the onlooker, hold semi-profile *cakra*

and *śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) on the right and left respectively. *Cakra* has four flames on all four cardinal points of the rim. *Śaṅkha* has five flames, one on the top, two at sides, one at the bottom and one at the back. The lower right hand is *abhaya-hasta* and the lower left is *śiṃhakarṇāhūya-varada*. Three *ratnavalayas*, *keyūra* with prominent *makarapurima*, a short *skandhamālā*, *kakṣamālā* in the form a small-string are the hand ornaments.

The face is benign and round with proportionate eyes, nose and lips. The *kirīṭa-makuta* with a *ratnapaṭṭa* at the bottom is beautified with frontal *makarapurima* and two small side *purimas* and stone-studded design in the middle part of *makuṭa*. A wide *ratnapaṭṭa* with hanging strings, *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) adorns the top of the *kirīṭa*. *Karṇapūṣpa*, *karṇapūra* and *makara-kunḍalas* are the ear- ornaments. Two beaded-strings of *kañṭhī*, a broad *grāiveyaka*, a beautifully designed *sara* (*sarika*), a thin *hāra* with pendant and

Śrīvatsa are noticeable on the upper part of chest. A thin fastening of the *Yajñopavīta* is unusual. Of the five strings of *Yajñopavīta*, the upper one is *stanaśūtra* and the lowest one is *urashśūtra/pralambashśūtra* going down *kaṭibandha*. Three middle strings i.e. *yajnasśūtra* are seen up to the level of *kaṭibandha*. *Udarabandha* is three banded and stone-studded. The stomach below the naval is depicted protruding slightly.

Pītāmbara is beautiful with horizontal lines and with thick border (*ambarānta*). *Kaṭibandha* is broad with round medallion with *kṛtrimavaktra*. The semi-circular loop of *uttariya* is noticeable on the lap. Broad and long *Pādajālas* adorn the feet.

At the back of the icon, *śiraścakra*, designed with eight *aras* (spokes) resembling lotus petals or *yava* grain and festoons from the central knob, is placed at the bottom of *kirīṭa*. The ringlets of the hair are beautifully arranged radially within the limits of *hāra* which has pendant also at the back. The lower portion of the *kacca* is prominently shown. *Kaṭibandha* and *uttariya* are shown beautifully. However, the end of *kacca* above the *kaṭibandha* and sashes of *uttariya* generally shown at the sides are not noticeable in this icon.

Both the size of this icon of Viṣṇu and with two holes on the *pīṭha* to insert *daṇḍa* for the processional reasons confirm this icon to be a *utsava-bera*.



Fig.89. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.1888/96
back view

Viṣṇu, Tiruppuvanam, Sivaganga Taluk, Madurai District, Accn .No. 15

This icon of Viṣṇu, datable to 12th-13th Century AD, is very unique and stands an important and valid proof of following the Āgamic injunctions as well as some technical aspects the sculptor had adopted.

Viṣṇu is depicted here in *sukhāsana* pose with the left leg folded and placed flat on the pedestal and the right leg dangling down. The face is round with double chin and all facial features such as wide eyes, beautiful eyebrows, sharp nose and lips especially, *cubuka* shown very well. The *kiriṭa-makuṭa*, measuring one and half times of the face, is very unique. Above *lalāṭapaṭṭa*, the base of *kiriṭa* is decorated with beads and well-designed *ratnapaṭṭa* above. Frontal *makarapurima* is very larger but the details are

corroded. The side *purimas* are also larger. The upper section of *kiriṭa* consisting of *ratnapaṭṭa*, *muktādāma*, *aṣṭadala-padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*) beautifies *kiriṭa-makuṭa*. The larger *karnapuṣpa*, *karnapūra* in the form of pearl strings and *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears.

The attributes *cakra* and *dakṣiṇāvarta śaṅkha* are held in the *kartarimukha* of the upper hands on right and left respectively. *Cakra* has sixteen *aras* (spokes) on both sides. *Śaṅkha* has a typical dividing line on the left side and the spirals are very prominent. Both the attributes have four flames, one on the top, one at the bottom and two on the sides. The lower right hand is *abhaya-hasta* and the left one is *āhūyavarada/siṃhakarṇa-mudrā*. A



Fig.90. Viṣṇu, Accn .No.15

broad *ratnavalaya* at the wrist and beautiful stone-studded *aṅgada* above the elbow and *Skandhamālās* beautify the hands in addition to *hāra*-type *bāhumāla* and *kakṣamāla* on the shoulders in front and back of the icon.

The neck seems to be unnatural at the joint with the head. A simple *upagrīva* and a broad *graiveyaka* adorn the upper torso. Unusually, the *yajñopavīta*, upto the fastening in the middle of the chest at the *hṛdayāvadhi* level, is thin and it bifurcates into *stanaśūtra* and *yajñasūtra*. *Udarabandha*, well-designed with pearl strings, is positioned unusually just below the breast rather at the *hṛdayāvadhi* level.

Pitāmbara is beautifully designed with horizontal lines and thick border (*ambarānta*). The *kaṭisūtra* and *kaṭibandha* are very simple without much ornamentation and *kṛtrimavaktra*. The semi-circular loop of *uttariya* is noticeable on the lap. *Nūpura* above the ankle and long *pādajāla* below adorn the feet.

At the back, beautifully designed *śiraścakra* is noticeable. The prominent rims, the *aras* and large festoons from the central knob are noteworthy. Tresses of hair are present radially within the limit of back part of *kañthī* and *graiveyaka*. The *kacca* at the back is beautifully placed above *kaṭibandha*. The ends of *uttariya* are shown on the pedestal.



**Fig.91. Viṣṇu, Accn .No. 15
back view**

The *pīṭha* (pedestal) of this icon deserves special mention. It consists of *upāna*, *mahāpadma*, *kampa*, *padma*, *paṭṭikā*, *jagatī*, *adhaḥ-padma*, *kumuda*, *ūrdhva-padma*, *kampa*, *kañtha* (with *pāda* design) and *ūrdhva-paṭṭī*. In fact, total *pīṭha* is cast in two parts, the upper part comprising the seated icon of Viṣṇu and the pedestal upto *kampa* below *jagatī*. The remaining components are the mouldings of the lower part. *Jaṭibandhana* has taken place at the joint of the

two sections of the *pīṭha*. This is undoubtedly to follow two important *āgamic* injunctions i.e. *ratna-nyāsa* and provision of *pāda-padmapīṭha*. If the pedestal is observed from beneath, one can notice nine projected sockets for the deposit of nine precious stones (*navaratna*) which had taken place above the first level of the pedestal. The *pādapīṭha*



Fig.92. Accn .No.15, Ratna-nyāsa

(foot rest) in the form of *padmapīṭha* is an important feature of the standard worshipable icon. Therefore, prior to the fixing of two parts of pedestal and deposit of *navaratnas*, a separate *padmapīṭha* is created and inserted (with locking facility inside) at the *kumuda* level just below the dangling foot. Moreover, a little portion of *ūrdhvapaṭṭī* of the pedestal is cut to accommodate the shank (*jaṅghā*) of the hanging leg in order to position the icon exactly in the middle of the pedestal.



Fig.93. Accn .No.15, Pāda-pīṭha

In the *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*, Viṣvaksena, the head of attendants of Viṣṇu, resembles His Lord in all features excepting Śrīvatsa and *pralambasūtra*. On

this base, one may tend to take this as the icon of Viṣvaksena. This problem can be solved based on certain features: a) In this very much used icon, *vakṣasthala*, the place of Śrīvatsa, is very much corroded and hence, even *stanākṣa* (small circle around the breast-nut) is also corroded. In some Viṣṇu icons, Śrīvatsa is not present. b) *Urassūtra/ pralambasūtra* is not present in some icons, hence, absence of *pralambasūtra* is not a main criteria. c) High importance of *pāda-padmapīṭha* decided by the *śilpin/ācārya* is an important aspect to conceive this icon to be a *kautuka-bera* of Viṣṇu rather Viṣvaksena.

6.3. *Sthānaka* (standing) icons of Viṣṇu with Consorts

Viṣṇu with Consorts, Peruntottam, Sirkali Taluk, Thanjavur District, Accn. No.2.

This *utsava-bera* of Viṣṇu, created following the injunctions of *Pāñcarātra Āgama*, is accompanied with the icons of consorts. In this, Viṣṇu is depicted in *samapādashthānaka* and the consorts in *sthitakuñcita* stance. The face is slightly oval with sharp nose and evolved level of the eyes and eye-brows. The long *kirīṭa-makuṭa* is much ornate. The *ratnapaṭṭa* and *lalāṭapaṭṭa* beautify the *kirīṭa* which has the frontal *makarakūṭa* (*makara-purima*) occupying the full height of *abhiṣeka* i.e. from the lower *ratnapaṭṭa* to upper *ratnapaṭṭa*. The upper *ratnapaṭṭa* is capped with *padma* and *kaustubha* (*mukula*). *Karṇapuṣpa*, *karṇapūra* and refined *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears.



Fig.94. Viṣṇu with Consorts, Accn. No.2.

Of the four hands, the upper hands with *kartarimukha* hold *cakra* (semi-profile) and *śaṅkha* (*dakṣiṇāvarta* and semi-profile) on the right and left respectively. Both *cakra* and *śaṅkha* have four flames, one on the top, one at the bottom and two on the sides. One of the side flames of *cakra* is broken. The lower right hand with *abhaya-mudrā* has a small well blown *padma* just below *tarjanī* (index finger) in which the stalk of the lotus is supposed to be shown between *aṅguṣṭha* and *tarjanī*. *Abhaya-hasta* slightly leans towards outside. The upturned palm of the lower left hand is placed on the tip of handle of *gadā*. *Gadā*, narrow with three bands, measures five and half *tālās* proportionate to the icon. Therefore, its bulbous end is not placed on the foot-plate but on *adhodala* of *padmapīṭha*. Three *valayas* at the wrist, *keyūra* with long elaborate *purima* above the crook, *aṅgada* at the crook, *skandhamālās*, *bāhumālā* on the right upper shoulder and *kakṣamālā* on the left upper shoulder are the embellishments of the hands.

A *kañṭhī*, *grāiveyaka* with *netra-bandha* design, *hāra* and *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper torso. The *yajñopavīta* is three-stranded with its fastening on the left bosom. *Stanasūtra* runs just below the breast level, *urassūtra/pralambasūtra* runs down the *kaṭibandha* and the *yajnasūtra* is extended upto the lower end of *kaṭibandha*. A broad *udarabandha* is noticeable above the naval.

Pītāmbara is well designed in *hastisūṇḍikā* fashion with horizontal curves with uniform interval. The knotted fold extending up to the end of the *pītāmbara* appearing between the thighs is wide and, hence, showing exact shape of the thighs and the portion below the knee. *Kaṭibandha* is wide with a large *kṛtrimānana* (lion's face). The fold of *uttariya* below *kaṭibandha*, semi-circular loop of *uttariya* in the front, larger than *ūrudāma*, and the sashes if *uttariya* on the sides all add an elegant appearance to this icon. *Pādapatra/bhujangavalaya* is noticeable above the ankle of right leg. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

The pedestal consists of square *upapīṭha* and circular *padmapīṭha*. *Upapīṭha*, from bottom to top, has *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kañṭha*,

kampa and *ūrdhvapattikā*. The props (*prabhāsaṅku*) on the *ūrdhvapaṭṭi* are supported by a figure of lion with their frontal body visible. *Padmapīṭha* has *adhodala* (*aṣṭadala*) and *ūrdhavadala* with its *karnikā* supporting the foot plate of the icon. *Jaṭibandhana* technique proves the talent of the sculptor. All *pīṭha*, the main icon and *gadā* are separate castings. *Jaṭibandhana* has taken place by inserting the foot-plate into the socket of *padmapīṭha*. At this time, the upper end of *gadā* is inserted inside the socket on the inverted palm and the lower end is slotted in a small socket on the *adhodala* of *padmapīṭha*.

At the backside of this icon, the *śiraścakra* is worked with a beautiful rim with its spokes resembling lotus petals. A beautiful tassel hangs from the central knob. The braided locks of hair with ringlets are radially arranged. *Pītāmbara* is worked very well. The noteworthy feature is the tucked-up end of *kacca* at the waist.

Consorts: Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi

The icon of Viṣṇu is flanked by that of Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi on the right and left respectively. Both of them are depicted *samabhaṅga* style of *sthitakuñcita* pose, with the outer leg placed firmly on the pedestal and the inner leg slightly bent at the knee and placed on the pedestal. Inner hand of them is *simhakarṇalāhūya-varada* and another hand is *dola-hasta* dangling along the body. Both of them are adorned with *karaṇḍamakuṭa*.

Śrīdevi is depicted with embellishments: *patrakuṇḍala*, *kañṭhī*, *graiveyaka*, *channavīra*, *skandhamālā*, *bāhumālā* on the left shoulder, *kakṣamālā* on the right shoulder, *cūḍaka*, *aṅgada* at the crook and three *valayas* at the wrist. The silken garment is topped with *śroṇīsūtra* (waist belt), *mekhalā* and *ūrudāma*. The sashes of garments are shown on the sides. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

In the icon of Bhūdevi, one can notice the embellishments: *makara-kuṇḍala*, *kañṭhī*, *graiveyaka*, *hāra*, single-threaded *yajñasūtra* with the fastening above left breast, *skandhamālā*, *bāhumālā* on the right shoulder, *kakṣamālā* on

the left shoulder, *cūḍaka*, *aṅgada* below the crook and three *valayas* at the wrist. The cotton garment is topped with *śronīsūtra* (waist belt), *mekhalā* and *ūrudāma*. The sashes of *uttariya* are shown hanging from the level of *śronīsūtra* and sashes of garments are shown on the sides. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

The pedestals of Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi resemble that of Viṣṇu but without the props (*prabhāśaṅku*). Unusual feature of this group is - two rings on both sides of the pedestal at *jagatī* level are provided only in these icons but not in the icon of Viṣṇu.

**Viṣṇu with Consorts, Srinivasanallur, Musiri Taluk, Trichy District,
Accn. No.31**

This unique *utsava-bera* of Viṣṇu, created following the injunctions of *Vaikhānasa Āgama*, is accompanied with the icons of consorts viz., Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi. In this, Viṣṇu is depicted in *samapādashānaka* and the consorts in *sthitakuñcita* stance.

The face is slightly oval with sharp and elegant nose and pronounced lips. *Lalāṭapaṭṭa* in the string form with intermediate strings makes the forehead little narrower. The *kiriṭa-makuṭa* measuring little more than the height of the face is much ornate. The *ratnapaṭṭa* at the bottom supports the frontal *makarakūṭa* (*makara-purima*). The *mālā* (*toraṇa* design) beginning from the

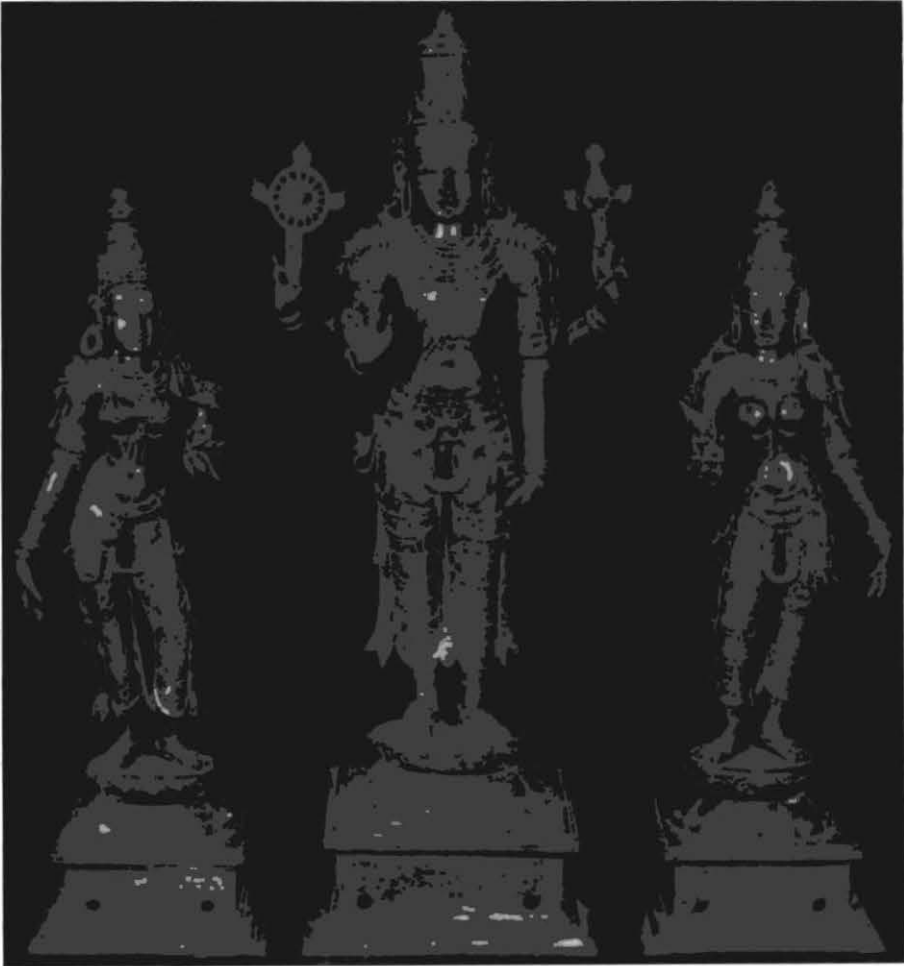


Fig.95. Viṣṇu with Consorts, Accn. No.31

bottom of *makarakūṭa* runs above the side *makara-purimas*. *Abhiṣeka* is topped with *ratnapaṭṭa* which is decorated with pearl strings below and *padmā* and *kaustubha* on the top. The position of the ears is slightly lower than the *netra-sūtra*. *Karṇapuṣpa*, *karṇapūra* and refined *makara-kunḍalas* adorn the ears.

In this four armed icon of Viṣṇu, the upper hands with *kartarimukha* hold *cakra* and *śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) on the right and left respectively. The stretched fingers of *kartarimukha* remain at the level of *hikkā-sūtra*. Even then, the tip of the upper flame of the attributes is raised to the level of *pūrvakeśānta*. *Cakra* is beautifully designed with sixteen spokes, a wide *nābhi* and thin *nemi*. Both *cakra* and *śaṅkha* have six flames, one on the top, and one at the bottom, two on the sides, one in the front and one at the back. The lower right hand bears *abhaya-mudrā*, slightly leaning towards outside. The palm, from *maṇibandha* to the tip of the finger, is smaller than the upper one. The tip of the middle finger of *abhaya-hasta* is lower than the level of *stana-sūtra*. The lower left hand is *ūruhasta* designed beautifully. Two *ratnavalayas* at the wrist, *keyūra* with beautiful *makara-purima* just above the crook, *aṅgada* with the floral design at the crook, *skandhamālās*, *hāra*-like *bāhumālās* on the upper shoulders and *kakṣamāla* on inner side of upper shoulders are the embellishments of the hands.

A *kaṇṭhī*, *graiveyaka* with *kausthuba* design, *hāra* with *netra-bandha* design and triangular *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper torso. The *yajñopavīta* is three-stranded with its fastening on the left *vakṣasthala* just above *stanākṣa*. *Stana-sūtra* runs just below the breast level, *urassūtra/pralambasūtra* runs down the *kaṭibandha* and the *yajnasūtra* is extended upto the lower end of *kaṭibandha*. A broad *udarabandha*, with prominent *ratnabandha* design in the front, is noticeable above the naval.

The *pītāmbara* is well designed in *hastisuṇḍikā* fashion with horizontal curves with proper interval and floral design between all curves. *Kaṭibandha* is wide with a large *kṛtrimānana* (lion's face) with the strings hanging from the mouth of the lion. The folds of *uttariya* below *kaṭibandha*, semi-circular loop of

uttariya in the front smaller than *ūrudāma* and the sashes of *uttariya* on the sides add beauty to this icon. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

The square *upapiṭha* of the pedestal is formed with *kṣudropāna*, *upāna*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha* (with *pāda* design), *kampa* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭikā*; and, the circular *padmapiṭha* consists of *adhodala* (*aṣṭadala*) and *ūrdhavadala* with its concave *karṇikā* as the foot-plate of the icon.

At the backside of this icon, the *śiraścakra* is worked with a beautiful rim with its spokes resembling lotus petals. A beautiful tassel hangs from the central knob. The braided locks of hair with ringlets are radially arranged. The noteworthy feature is the tucked-up end of *kacca* at the waist. *Pitāmbara* is worked very well.

Consorts: Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi:

The icon of Viṣṇu is flanked by the icons of Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi on the right and left respectively. Both of them are depicted *samabhaṅga* style of *sthitakuñcita* pose, with the outer leg placed firmly on the pedestal and the inner leg folded at the knee and placed on the pedestal. The outer hand of them is *dolahasta*, dangling along the body. A beautiful *padma* is held in the *simhakarṇa-hasta* of Śrīdevi and lily (*nīlotpala*) is placed in the *kaṭaka-hasta* of Bhūdevi. Both of them are adorned with *karaṇḍamakuṭa*, decorated with larger *purimas* in the front and smaller *purimas* on the sides. *Karaṇḍamakuṭa* of Śrīdevi has beautiful three-layered *ratnapaṭṭa* whereas that of Bhūdevi is adorned with a thin *ratnapaṭṭa* and *lalāṭapaṭṭa*.

Śrīdevi is depicted with embellishments: *Karṇapuṣpa*, *patrakunḍala*, *kaṇṭhī*, *graiveyaka*, *hāra*, *channavira*, *skandhamālā*, *bāhumālā*, *kakṣamālā*, *cūḍaka*, *aṅgada* at the crook and two *ratnavalayas* at the wrist. In addition, two strings hanging from the shoulder beautifully runs up to *kuca-bandha* (breast-band). The silken garment with floral design clinging to the body is topped with *śroṇisūtra* (waist belt), *mekhalā*, *ūrudāma* and semi-circular loop of

uttariya in front. The sashes of garments are shown on the sides. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

In the icon of Bhūdevi, one can notice the embellishments: *karnpuṣpa*, *karnapūra*, *makara-kunḍala*, *kaṇṭhī*, *graiveyaka*, *hāra*, single-threaded *yajñasūtra* with the fastening above left breast, *skandhamālā*, *bāhumālā*, *kakṣamālā*, *cūḍaka*, *aṅgada* below the crook and two *ratnavalayas* at the wrist. The silken garment is topped with *śroṇīsūtra* (waist belt), *mekhalā* and *ūrudāma*, in addition to the semi-circular loop of *uttariya* in the front. The sashes of *uttariya* are shown hanging from the level of *śroṇīsūtra* up to the middle of the thigh. The sashes of garments are shown on the sides. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

The icons of Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi are in standing stance on the pedestal resembling that of Viṣṇu. Two holes at the bottom of *kaṇṭha* of the pedestal in all icons indicate the group to be *utsava-beras*, datable to 14th-15th Centuries AD based on iconographical features.

6.4. Āsīna (seated) icons of Viṣṇu with Consorts

Viṣṇu, Olayakunnam, Thanjavur District, Accn. No.503/65

In this icon of seated Viṣṇu created following the injunctions of *Pāñcarātra Āgama*, though of late period i.e. 15th Century AD, incorporates some of the earlier features. This is the only metal icon where Viṣṇu is flanked by consorts viz., Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi who are depicted as *pūjaka* (worshipper) in the attitude of worship.

In this icon, Viṣṇu is depicted seated in the middle of circular *padmapīṭha* by which *sukhāsana* posture has taken the form of almost *lalitāsana*. The left leg is folded and placed flat on the *padmapīṭha* and the right leg, raised at the knee is placed horizontally with the foot placed firmly on the pedestal. The icon of Viṣṇu is defined in *sapta-tāla* style of iconometry. Hence the face, the torso and protruding belly (*lambodara*) are very large and prominent comparable to the size of the limbs.

The face is oval and wide with protruding eyeballs and lips with upward curve. Two layers of *lalāṭapaṭṭa* are present on the forehead. *Kirīṭa-makuṭa* is short with its base wider than the circumference of the head. *Ratnapaṭṭa* has *puṣpapurima* in the front and sides. *Latā-toraṇa* design is well projected on the *abhiṣeka* topped with *ratnapaṭṭa*, *padma* and *mukula*. The hair-locks are shown spreading like *vikirṇajatā*. *Makara-kunḍalas* are designed with the face of crocodile taking the term '*makara*' to mean crocodile.



Fig.96. Viṣṇu, No.503/65

Of the four hands, upper hands hold *cakra* and *śaṅkha* (*vāmāvarta*) on the right and left respectively. The *kartarimukha-mudrā* is unusual with the tip of the stretched fingers raised to the level of *netra-sūtra* and, hence, the tip of the attributes above the level of *uṣṇīṣa*. *Cakra* has five flames, one on the top, one on the bottom, two on the sides and one in the front on *nābhi*. *Śaṅkha* has four flames, one on the top, one on the bottom and two on the sides. The lower hands bear *pallava-mudrā* with the palm turned upwards. A lotus, with wide *karṇikā* and four small petals on the sides, is placed on the right palm. The left palm is empty but it is supposed to hold *gadā* placed horizontally on it as noticed in the icons of Viṣṇu (Accn. Nos.17, 5/01, 554/66, and 559/61). *Bāhumālā* on the shoulders, two *valayas* above the crook, one *valaya* on the wrist of the upper right hand, two *valayas* on the wrist of other hands are the hand ornaments. A broad *grāiveyaka*, a broad three-stringed *yajñopavīta* and *udarabandha* with beautiful central medallion adorn the torso.

Pitāmbara is simple with horizontal borders. *Kaṭibandha* is beautifully designed with *kṛtrimānana*. The sashes of *uttariya* hang down and spread on both sides as three separate tassels. *Pādakaṭaka* adorn the feet at the ankle.

At the back side, the spread of hair tresses, stout torso and plumb lower portion almost resembles the back-side of icon of *Gajānana* and *tālamāna* of



**Fig.97. Accn. No.503/65
back view**

this icon is easily realised by this appearance. The spread hair-locks appear like the manes (saṭā) of Narasimha, one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu.

The *pāda* (legs) of *prabhāsaṅku* is fixed on the *padmapīṭha* just at the back side of the icon of Viṣṇu and this serves as the back-support of Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi depicted seated on the sides. Both of them are in *padmāsana* seated stance with *anjali-hasta* in worshipping attitude. *Karaṇḍa-makuṭa* is longer than the face but the hair tresses spread radially on the sides (*vikīrṇakeśa*) and large *patrakuṇḍalas* dominate the face. Their total size (from base to *kirīṭa*) is up to the level of *hikkā-sūtra* of the icon of Viṣṇu. They are adorned with *graiveyaka*, *hāra*, *bāhumālā* and *ratnavalaya* on the wrists.

The *prabhāvalī* is designed in grand manner. Large *makaras* at the bottom of *prabhāvalī* on both sides support the entire *prabhāvalī*. It has five *yaṣṭis*, thin first one with simple design, next broad *yaṣṭi* with floral design with long interval and the third *yaṣṭi* simple like the first one. A beautiful *toraṇa* inside the first *yaṣṭi*, *hamsavāla* (tail of swan) above the third *yaṣṭi* and the flames on the fourth *yaṣṭi* prove the majestic appearance and importance of the icon. The top most central flame on the rim of upper *yaṣṭi* is flanked with fourteen *dakṣiṇāvarta* flames on the right side and the same number of *vāmāvarta* flames on the left side. *Hamsavāla* moulds are seven on each side, *dakṣiṇāvarta* on the right side and *vāmāvarta* on the left side. A large central medallion with pearl design is placed on the broad second *yaṣṭi* exactly above the canopy of *toraṇa*.

Padmapīṭha is very simple with the mouldings of *adhodala*, *paṭṭikā* and *ūrdhavadala* in the same fashion *padma* mould is noticeable in Kerala temples. In addition to this, all the features clearly indicate this icon to be of Kerala.

Viṣṇu with Consorts, (Seated Two-armed)

Komal, Mayiladuturai Taluk, Nagapattinam District. Accn. No.18



Fig.98. Viṣṇu, Accn. No.18

This *kautuka-bera* of Viṣṇu, accompanied with the icons of consorts, is unique for certain features – two armed with *cakra* and *śankha*, *Vanamālin* and the position of legs and datable to 13th century AD.

In this, Viṣṇu is depicted in *sukhāsana* stance, unusually with the right leg folded and placed flat on the pedestal and the left leg dangling down.

The *upapīṭha* is rectangular and large in size to accommodate the beautiful *prabhāvali* with six *yaṣṭis*. It consists of *upāna*, *padma*, *jagatī*, *padma*, *antarita*, *adhahpadma*, *kumuda*, *ūrdhvapadma*, *kampa*, *kañṭha*, *kampa*, *padmavājana* and *ūrdhvapatti*. The elliptical *padmapīṭha* consists of *upāna*, *adhodala* and *ūrdhvadala*.

The face is round and very benign (*saumya*) attitude. The base of *kiriṭa*, with broad *ratnapaṭṭa*, is fit exactly at the circumference of the head. A large *makara-purima* in the front, small *purimas* on the sides, *ratnapaṭṭa* on the top, pearl strings below *ratnapaṭṭa* and *padma* and *kaustubha* on the top beautify the

kiriṭa-makuṭa. *Karṇapuṣpa* is designed in the form a bud with stem. Beautiful and slender *makara-kunḍalas* are attached to the upper part of the earlobe (*karṇanāla*).

In this two armed icon of Viṣṇu, the right hand is *abhaya-hasta* with the palm having the well-projected relief form of *cakra* with four flames. The left hand is *varada-hasta* holding a small *śaṅkha* attached to the palm. *Skandhamālās* and *bāhumālās* on the shoulders, *keyūra* in the middle of upper part of the arm (*bāhumadhyā*), *aṅgada* just above the crook, *valaya* in the middle of forearm (*prakoṣṭha-madhyā*) and *ratnavalaya* at the wrist are the embellishments of the hand. *Kaṇṭhī*, broad *graiveyaka*, *hāra* and *Śrīvatsa* adorn the upper torso. The *yajñopavīta* is three-stranded with its fastening at the middle of the chest. *Stanasūtra* runs just below the breast level, *urassūtra/pralambasūtra* runs down the *kaṭibandha* and the *yajnasūtra* is extended up to the lower end of *kaṭibandha*. A broad *udarabandha* is noticeable above the naval. *Vanamālā* hanging from the shoulder runs down along the body and on the thighs and culminates with beautiful pendant below the folded leg, probably *kaustubha*.

Pītāmbara is well-designed in *hastisuṇḍikā* fashion with horizontal folds at uniform interval. The knotted fold, extending up to the end of the *pītāmbara*, appears below the foot of the folded leg. *Kaṭibandha* is wide with a large *kṛtrimānana* (lion's face). The fold of *uttariya* below *kaṭibandha* and semi-circular loop of *uttariya* in the front larger than *ūrudāma* and the sashes of *uttariya* on the sides add beauty to this icon. Large *pādasaras* adorn the feet.

The *prabhāvalī*, set upright on the props (*prabhāśaṅku*) above *upapiṭha*, is designed in grand manner with six well-decorated *yaṣṭis*. Large *makaras* at the bottom of *prabhāvalī* on both sides support the entire *prabhāvalī*. The top most central flame on the rim of external *yaṣṭi* is flanked with thirteen *dakṣiṇāvarta* flames on the right side and the same number of *vāmāvarta* flames on the left side.

Consorts: Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi:

The icon of Viṣṇu is flanked by that of Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi on the right and left respectively. Both of them are depicted in *sukhāsana* style applicable to the female icons, with the outer leg dangling down and the inner leg placed flat on the pedestal with a slight raise at the knee. Inner hand of them is *śīṃhakarṇa/āhūya-varada* and another hand is *varada-hasta/dāna-hasta*. Both the icons are adorned with *karaṇḍa-makuṭa*, beautified with a large frontal *purima* and small side *purimas*.

Śrīdevi is depicted with embellishments: *karṇapuṣpa*, *patrakunḍala*, *kaṇṭhī*, *graiveyaka*, *channavīra*, *skandhamālā*, *bāhumālā* on the right shoulder, *kakṣamālā* on the left shoulder, *cūḍaka*, *aṅgada* at the crook and *valayas* at the wrist. The silken garment is topped with *śroṇīsūtra* (waist belt), *mekhalā* and *ūrudāma*. The semi-circular loop of *uttariya* in the front larger than *ūrudāma* and the sashes of *uttariya* on the sides beautify the garment. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

In the icon of Bhūdevi one can notice the embellishments: *karṇapuṣpa*, *lalāṭapaṭṭa*, *karṇapūra*, *makara-kunḍala*, *kaṇṭhī*, *graiveyaka*, *hāra*, single-threaded *yajñasūtra* with the fastening above left breast, *skandhamālā*, *bāhumālā* on the shoulders, *cūḍaka*, *aṅgada* below the crook and *valayas* at the wrist. The cotton garment is topped with *śroṇīsūtra* (waist belt), *mekhalā* and *ūrudāma*. The sashes of *uttariya* are shown hanging from the level of *śroṇīsūtra* and sashes of garments are shown on the sides. *Pādasaras* adorn the feet.

The rectangular *upapīṭha* of Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi consists of *upāna*, *padma*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kaṇṭha*, *kampa*, *padmavājana* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*. The elliptical *padmapīṭha* comprises *upāna*, *adhodala*, *ūrdhavadala* and *karnikā* as the base of icons.

The theme of the icon of Viṣṇu is well planned to accommodate both the concepts i.e. two-armed and depiction of *sahaja-āyudhas* (indispensible attributes) viz., *cakra* and *śankha*. This is the only icon of two armed Viṣṇu adorned with beautiful *Vanamālā*.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

7.1 Value of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* in identification of icons of Viṣṇu and iconographical details

In modern days, it is the high task to study and analyse the temples and icons therein just following the treatises of one branch alone, either *Pāñcarātra* or *Vaikhānasa*. It is well-observed, “Many of the temples of Viṣṇu, currently following *Vaikhānasa* or *Pāñcarātra* system, cannot be exactly classified (except in some cases supported with epigraphy) under either of the two categories for, no support is available to trace out whether they were originally following *Vaikhānasa* or *Pāñcarātra* system. In most of the temples, the system had changed almost right from 10th century AD, obviously for want of the priests (*pūjakas* / *arcakas*), ... Therefore, the survey is based on the iconographical details alone irrespective of the worshipping system prevalent there at present.”¹

The *Āgamas* in general and *śilpa-śāstra* always insist on an important aspect i.e. combination of *ācārya* (preceptor), *śilpin* (sculptor/architect) and *yajamāna* (donor), for the best result of creating a temple or icon to be installed therein. A number of donors (*yajamāna*) and kings had lived a good life and they had contributed for the development of the temples. The temples remain but the residences of the donors are not available. The reason behind this is that they had not extended the care they have taken for the temples to the residential complexes.

The *Āgamas* focus on the iconic worship, Hence, they have to detail every aspect for the best production of icons and temples. Undoubtedly, *śilpa-śāstra* is a canonical guide for the same. The *Āgamas* insist on following the instructions of the *śilpa-śāstra* but with some special attention and special care

¹ K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.373-374.

in this regard. The *Āgamas* reiterate certain points so that the forthcoming generations do not violate the rules and regulations by the way of reasoning.

The *Āgamas* do not speak of anything new but whatever existed and practiced during the time of their compilations. On the other hand, they presented the same theme in modified manner to appeal to public. Certain cults and practices of different regions have to be accommodated in the changing time and on account of cultural and political transitions and transactions. For instance, the icons of *Māṭrkās* (*Sapta-māṭrkā* or *aṣṭa-māṭrkā*) and *Jyeṣṭhā*, unknown or less-known to the Tamil region, became prominent in the 6th century AD and this is proved by a number of monuments (rock-cuts and structural temples). The *Āgamic* tradition did not oppose this but accommodated in the temple premises as sub-ordinate deities. In the same way, one can notice in the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* the sanction of Trimūrti worship. However, this cult could not retain its status for more than two centuries, probably, due to change in religious and political conditions.

The prescriptions of the *Āgamas* were valued almost right from the early days, either in construction of the temple or creation of icons. The trend enabled the development of a number of creative forms in the field of art and architecture. However, the reason behind the same is not explored. For instance, the *Āgamas* prescribe that deity should not face the southern side. The *Ādivarāha* rock-cut cave temple (*Pārameśvara mahāvarāha-viṣṇu-grha*) at Mamallapuram faces the west. Therefore, the icon of *Varāha* is depicted with the head turned towards the north and, hence, holds *Bhūdevi* on the right side. In Tiruvidaventai, a place near Mamallapuram, the temple faces east, hence, *Varāha* is depicted with the face turned to north. When Tirumangai Ālvār visited, for the first time, he praised the Lord as '*tiru iḍa entai*' meaning 'Lord holding Śrī on the left side' in his hymn called *Periya Tirumoli*. However, the *Puraṇas* and other literature speak of *Varāha* carrying *Bhūdevi* but not *Śrīdevi*. Undoubtedly, the sculptors had followed the prescription of *Āgamas*, and, thus, gradually the rules became normal practice.

The *Vaikhānasa* and the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* differ from one another in some details in the field of iconography especially the icons. Both of them have descriptions of some unique icons of Viṣṇu and other divinities. For instance, the icon of Hayagrīva detailed in *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* do not get mention in the *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*. In the same way, Mānuṣa-Vāsudeva has special mention in the *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*, for which, the best examples are the temples at Tiruvalikkeni (Pārthasārathi temple) and Tirunariyur (Nacchiyar Koyil near Kumbakonam). This is probably on account of some practices in some places.

There are number of similarities between them where both the traditions have been followed by the sculptors. For instance, the *dhruva-bera* should be in *uttama-daśātāla* in the form of four-armed Viṣṇu/Vāsudeva. In case, the temple is dedicated to Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and *Pañcavīra* (Mānuṣa-vāsudeva), the *kautuka-bera* or *dhruva-bera* must be four-armed Viṣṇu. A brief survey of this aspect in some of the temples testifies for the meticulous adherence to the *Āgamic* principles.

- a. In the temple at Tirunaraiyur (Mānuṣa-vāsudeva), the *dhruva-bera* is two-armed. Therefore, the *kautuka/utsava-bera* is four-armed Viṣṇu.
- b. In the temple at Tiruvallikkeni (Mānuṣa-vāsudeva), the *dhruva-bera* is two-armed. Therefore, the *kautuka/utsava-bera* is four-armed Viṣṇu.
- c. In the Kodandarāma (Tiru Ayodhyā Perumāl) temple at Madhurantakam (*Madhurāntaka cāturdvedimangalam*), both *dhruva-bera* and *utsava-beras* are two-armed Rāma in *madhyamā-daśātāla*. Therefore, the *kautuka-bera* is four-armed Viṣṇu.
- d. In the Viranārayaṇa Perumāl temple (*Viranārāyaṇa Viṇṇagaram*) at Kattumannargudi (near Chidambaram), the *utsava-bera* is two-armed Sāyudha Kṛṣṇa but the *dhruva-bera* and *kautuka-bera* are four-armed Vāsudeva.

e. In the Rājagopālasvāmi temple at Mannargudi (near Tanjavur), the *utsava-bera* is two-armed Sāyudha Kṛṣṇa but the *dhruva-bera* is four-armed Vāsudeva.

f. In the temple at Uttukakadu (late medieval) near Tanjore, the *utsava-bera* is Kāliya-nartana Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the *dhruva-bera* is four-armed Vāsudeva.

In the above places ranging from the period prior to 8th century AD to 14th Century AD, either *Pāñcarātra* or *Vaikhānasa*, general prescriptions are uniformly adhered to. This proves that the *śilpins/sthapatis* were in a position to follow whatever the *śilpa-śāstra* and *Āgamas* prescribe in particular period. The sculptors had followed some common prescriptions of the *Āgamas* irrespective of the system of worship in the temples.

Some of the icons housed in the Government Museum, Chennai, stand as the best examples for the amalgamation of the principles of *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra* *Āgamas*. *Urassūtra*, known as also *pralamba-sutra*, gets special mention the *Vaikhānasa* works. The *Pāñcarātra* texts speak of this *sūtra* but do not give details. Kriyādhikāra¹ adds an anecdote² to justify the position of this *sūtra*. As per this text, this *sūtra* should run from the right breast (from fastening), should run in the middle of body and should be extended upto left ankle. The description itself is complicated. This is applicable to the seated (*āsīna*) icon of Viṣṇu. The icons studied here are matching to *Vaikhānasa* *Āgama* details but do not have the *sūtra* this way but the *sūtra* is shown running inside the *kaṭibandha* and *pīṭambara*. On the other hand, in the seated icons of Viṣṇu (Accn. Nos.5-01, 17, 459/61 and 554/66) considered to be of *Pāñcarātra* based on the four attributes *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *gadā* and *padma*, this *sūtra* is shown beautifully appearing above the left leg folded and placed flat on the pedestal. In the same way, many ornaments are used in the icons irrespective of the tradition of worship they belong to.

¹ KRA.5.158-161

² Vide. Terminology.

A number of iconographers and art-historians had pioneered in the field of Indian icons and they had tried their level best to identify the icons with the support of the material (epigraphical and textual) whatever available during their time. With the support of a number of *Āgamic* treatises (published and unpublished), some of the icons can be accurately identified. This is possible only with the help of the treatises of *Āgamas* in collaboration with *śilpa* texts of the particular region. For instance, the details found in *Aparājita-prccha* or *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhara* are meant for mainly the temples and icons available in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and some of the regions in northern belt. The details in *Pāñcarātra Āgama* can be taken for the study of icons throughout India. The *Vaikhānasa Āgamic* details tally with the icons and temples almost on the southern side of river Godāvarī.

As such, the icon of one divinity i.e. Viṣvaksena in particular, deserve mention here in connection with its accurate identification. A seated icon of Viṣvaksena from Kulittalai, Trichy District (Accn. No.65/40) has been identified as Viṣṇu. Because, the *Āgamas* mention that Viṣvaksena is identical with Viṣṇu but without Śrīvatsa and *pralamba-sūtra*. In this icon, one can find the *pralamba-sūtra*, invariably mentioned also as *urassūtra*. Absence of Śrīvatsa can not be taken as main criteria, because Śrīvatsa is not shown in some icons of Viṣṇu. The unique



Fig.99. Viṣvaksena, Accn. No.65/40

feature in this icon is *tarjanī-mudrā*, as applicable to Viṣvaksena as described in *Pāñcarātra* texts.¹

Another interesting icon from Chimakurti, Andhra Pradesh (Accn. No.18) housed in the Government Museum, Chennai, requires textual evidence of *Vaiṣṇava Āgama*. This icon identified as Viṣṇu is indeed not Viṣṇu but incarnation of Viṣṇu i.e. Rāma. In this icon seated in *vīrāsana*, obviously *matsyāsana*, the right hand bears *jñāna-mudrā*² and the left hand is placed on the knee. This icon matches with the description of Rāma found in *Vāyu saṁhitā*³ of *Pāñcarātra Āgama*. This icon is supposed to be flanked with that of Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and so on.



Fig.100. Rāma, Accn. No.18

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.22.37a-38:

āśinamaparābhyāṁ ca hastābhyāṁ śaṅkhacakraṇam //
athavā pūrvakarayorgadāmekatra kalpayet /
anyatra tarjanīmudrāṁ yadvā dakṣiṇahastayoḥ //

² K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.41.

³ *Jñāna-mudrā*, known as also *sandarśa-mudrā* and *tattva-mudrā*, is almost identical with *cin-mudrā* but held near the heart in which the palm of the hand remains turned towards the heart². This gesture must be ½ *aṅgulas* above the level of the breast-nut; and the middle line (*madhyama-rekhā*) of the palm must be at the distance of 20 to 23 *aṅgulas* from navel (*nābhī*)."

³ *Vāyu.2.* (Mss. Cf. Smith, Daniel, *op. cit.*, p.150):

atha dhyānamahaṁ vakṣye rāmasyādbhutakarmanah /
kālameghasamacchāyaṁ vīrāsanāsamānvitam //
dakṣahastāgravilasajjñānamudrābhiśobhitam /
vāmajānukaṭṭhinyastavāmapāṇivirājitam //

7.2 Need of Āgamic study for replacement of displaced icons of Viṣṇu

A number of icons have been shifted to other places by way of theft and robbery. In past centuries, when India faced a number of invasions, wars and battles, a number of temples had been razed to earth and the materials housed in the temple premises had been looted. This had happened almost right from 12th century AD. Some of the manuals like *Koyil Oḷugu* (*Chronicles of Srirangam Temple*) and *Tirumalai Oḷugu* (*Manual of Tirumala Temple*) give the detailed information. During this time, even the icons had been changed to other places. That is why, in some temples like Kanchipuram (Varadarāja Perumāl temple) and Melkote (Seluvanārāyaṇasvāmi temple), both Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi are identical and both of them hold flower in the right hand and their left hand is *dola-hasta*.

All icons of Viṣṇu need not be taken as belonging to Viṣṇu temples only. In many Śiva temples, the icon of Viṣṇu is housed and worshipped as *parivāra-devatā*. This poses a main problem regarding the identification of the icons of Viṣṇu. A careful iconometric study, based on the Āgamas, can solve the problem. The icon of Viṣṇu in the Viṣṇu temple is fashioned in *uttama-daśa-tāla* whereas the same as *parivāra-devatā* in Śiva temple must be fashioned in *madhyamā-daśa-tāla* or *kaniṣṭha-daśa-tāla*. Besides the icon, the pedestal of icon also plays important role to assign the icon to the proper temple.

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* mention five or six types of icons of Viṣṇu to be installed and consecrated in the sanctum sanctorum. The grade of the temple depends on the availability of icons in the temple. Besides the regional variations, each temple and the icon therein is created based on one text of any of the two traditions of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*. Generally, all types of icons in the sanctum sanctorum (*garbha-grha*) resemble others to some extent, iconographically or iconometrically. The temple and the icon are interrelated for the size and features. This subtle theme could be understood only by the extensive survey of temples with the support of Āgamic treatises.

7.3. Further scope of study of Āgamic treatises

The present research work deals with some select standing and seated icons of Viṣṇu housed in the Government Museum, Chennai. There are more icons in this category in addition to other forms of Viṣṇu which require a detailed study.

The icons can be studied thoroughly from the view point of detailed iconometric mode i.e. to analyse the dimensions and measurements in detail including the minute aspects. This is possible only through the proper analytical study of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*. Yet a number of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamic* treatises are available in the manuscripts in different localities in the custody of temple priests and *Maṭhas* but many of them in the condition of deterioration due to improper care on account of financial paucity as well as the scarcity of scholars who can read and write some of the important scripts like Grantha, Telugu and so on. Moreover, the study of Indian temple architecture and art requires sound and analytical knowledge in Sanskrit and practical knowledge in the field of temple architecture and iconography. For this, an extensive survey of monuments (museums and temples *in situ*) has to be undertaken to decipher and decode what the *Āgamas* contain. Thus, the study of *Āgamas* and the survey of monuments are complement to one another.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Archaeological

Epigraphia Indica

Pallavar Cheppedugal Muppatu, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Madras

Pandiar Cheppedugal Pattu, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Madras, 1967

South Indian Inscriptions

Vaikhānasa works

Ānanda Samḥitā of Marīci, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, 1998.

Kāśyapa Jñānakāṇḍa, Ed. R.B. Parthasarathi Bhattacharya, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, 1960.

Khilādhikāra of Bhṛgu, Ed. R.B. Parthasarathi Bhattacharya, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, 1961 (first edition).

Kriyādhikāra of Bhṛgu, Ed. S.B. Raghunathacharya, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, 1982 (Second edition).

Prakīrṇādhikāra of Bhṛgu (Telugu script), Ed. K. Srinivasa Bhattacharya, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, 1997.

Prakīrṇādhikāra of Bhṛgu (Telugu script), Vaikhānasa Vidyānilaya Edition, Hindu Ratnakar Press, Chennai, 1851 (*śaka*).

Samūrtāṛcanādhikaraṇa of Atri, Ed. V. Raghunatha Cakravarti Bhattacharya and M. Ramakrishna Kavi, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, 1946.

Vāsādhikāra of Bhṛgu (Telugu script), Ed. Divi Venkata Ramanujacharya and Vikhanasa Bhattacharya, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, 1999.

Vimānārcanākalpa of Marīci (Devanāgarī script) Ed. V. Raghunatha Cakravarti Bhattacharya and Setu Madhavacharya, Sri Venkateswara Mudranalaya, Chennai, 1926.

Vimānārcanākalpa of Marīci (Telugu script), Vaikhānasa Vidyānilaya Edition, D. Rangacarya, Yigavarilem, 1927.

Yajñādhikāra of Bhṛgu (Telugu script), Ed. D. Rangacarya, Vaikhānasa Vidyānilaya 1931.

Yajñādhikāra of Bhṛgu (Telugu script), Ed. K. Srinivasa Bhattacharya, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, 1997.

Pāñcarātra Works

Ahīrbudhnya saṁhitā, Ed. M.D. Ramanujacarya, Adyar Library, Madras, 1916.

Īśvara saṁhitā, Ed. and Trans. M.A. Lakshmi Tathacharya, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, 2009.

Jayākhya saṁhitā, Ed. Embar Krishnamacharya, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1931

Lakṣmītantra, Ed. V. Krishnamacharya, Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai, 1969.

Nāradiya saṁhitā, Ed. Raghavprasad Chaudhary, Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Tirupati, 2001.

Pādma saṁhitā, Part I, Ed. Seetha Padmanabhan and R.N. Sampath, Pancaratra Parisodhana Parisad, Madras, 1974.

Parama saṁhitā, Ed. and Trans. S. Krishnaswamy Ayyangar, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1940

Pārameśvara saṁhitā, Ed. Govindacharya, Trichy, 1953

Paṇḍara Saṁhitā, Part-II, Ed. and Trans. Prabhakar Pandurang Apte, Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Tirupati, 2006.

Sanatkumāra saṁhitā, Ed. V. Krishnamacharya, Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai, 1969.

Sātvata saṁhitā, Ed. and Trans. Prabhakar Pandurang Apte, Academy of Sanskrit Research, Melkote, 2005.

Śrīpraśna saṁhitā, Ed. Seetha Padmanabhan, Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Tirupati, 2006

Viṣvaksena saṁhitā, Ed. Lakshmi Narasimha Bhatta, Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Tirupati, 1972.

Śilpa Works

Aparājitapṛcchā of Bhuvanadeva, Ed. P.A. Mankad, Gaekwad's Oriental Series No.CXIV, Baroda, 1950.

Brāhmīya-citrakarmaśāstra, Ed. V. Sundara Sarma and G. Nagaraja Rao, Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Series N0.86, Tanjore, 1960.

Kāśyapaśilpa-śāstra, Part I, Ed. K.S. Subrahmanya Sastry, Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Series N0.89, Tanjore, 1960.

Kāśyapaśilpa-śāstra, Part II, Ed. K.S. Subrahmanya Sastry, Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Series N0.122, Tanjore, 1968.

Mānasāra, Ed. P.K. Acharya, Oriental Books reprint Corporation, New Delhi, 1979 (second edition).

Sakalādhikāra, Ed. K. Vasudeva Sastry, Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Series N0.92, Tanjore, 1961.

Sārasvatīya-citrakarmaśāstra, Ed. K.S. Subrahmanya Sastri, Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Series N0.87, Tanjore, 1960.

Śilparatna of Śrikumāra, Ed. N. Devanathacharya, Tanjore Sarasvati Mahal Library, Tanjore, 1989.

Other Sanskrit and Tamil works

Abhilaṣitārtha-cintāmaṇi of Someśvaradeva, Part I, Ed. R. Shama Sastry, Oriental Library Publications Sanskrit Series No.69, University of Mysore, 1926.

Bhagavad Gītā, (*Gītābhāṣya* of Rāmānuja), Trans. M.R. Sampatkumaran, Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute, Mumbai, 1885.

Bharatakośa, Ed. M. Ramakrishna Kavi, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati, 1999 (reprint)

Brahmavidyāvijaya of Mahācārya, Critically Ed. K.K.C.S. Badhri Narayanan, (unpublished Thesis) submitted to Rashtriya Sanskrit University, Tirupati, 2010.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Academy of Sanskrit Research, Melkote, 2009.

- Mahābhārata*, Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1906
- Mahābhārata*, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, 2002.
- Muṇḍakopaniṣat*, Academy of Sanskrit Research, Melkote, 2005.
- Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*, Ed. S. Krishnaswamy Ayyangar, V.V.S. Committee, Chennai, 1981.
- Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata, Ed. N.P. Unni, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 1998.
- Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, Pub: N. Ramaratnam, Chennai, 1958.
- Sandhyāvandanabhāṣya* of K. Srinivasa Ayyangar, Ed. S. Krishnaswamy Ayyangar, Sri Vaishnava Sudarsanam, Trichy.
- Upaniṣatsaṅgraha*, Motilal Banarsidass, Chennai, 2006 (reprint)
- Vāstusūtra Upaniṣad*, Ed. and trans. Alice Borner, S.R. Sharma and Bettina Baumer, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2000 (reprint)
- Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Ed. Kanchi P.B. Annangaracharya, Granthamala Office, Kanchipuram, 1972.
- Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Third *Khaṇḍa* Vol.I, Ed. Priyabala Shah, Gaekwad's Oriental Series No.130, Oriental Institute, Vadodara, 1994.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Balasubrahmanyam, S.R., *Early Chola Temples*, Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi, 1971.
- Balasubrahmanyam, S.R., *Later Chola Temples*, Mudgala Trust, Madras, 1979.
- Balasubrahmanyam, S.R., *Middle Chola Temples*, Thomson Press (India) Ltd., Faridabad, 1975.
- Banerjea, J.N., *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1985 (Fourth edition).
- Champakalakshmi, R., *Vaiṣṇava Iconography in the Tamil Country*, Orient Longman Ltd, New Delhi, 1981.
- Dayalan, D., *Early Temples of Tamil Nadu - Their Role in Socio-Economic life (c. A.D. 550 – 925)*, Harman Publishing House, New Delhi, 1992.

- Gopinatha Rao, T.A., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1993 (Reprint).
- Gravelly, F.H. and Ramachandran, T.N., *Catalogue of Hindu Metal Images in the Government Museum, Madras*, 2002 (2nd edition).
- Kannan, R., *Manual of the Bronzes*, Government Museum, Chennai, 2003.
- Lakshmi Narasimhan, K.K.C., *A Study of Vaikhānasa Iconography*, Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute, Mumbai, 2007.
- Liebert Gosta, *Iconographic Dictionary of the Indian Religions*, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1986 (second edition).
- Parampurushdas Sadhu & Shrutiprakashdas Sadhu (Eds), *Catalogue of Pāñcarātra Samhitā*, Swaminarayan Aksharpith, Amdavad, 2002.
- Reddiyar N. Subbu, *Pandinattut Tiruppatikal* (Tamil), S.R. Subramania Pillai Publishers, Tirunelveli, 1977.
- Sircar, D.C. *Select Inscriptions*, Calcutta, 1965
- Sivaramamurti, C., *Chitrasūtra of Vishnudharmottara*, Kanak Publications, New Delhi, 1978.
- Smith, H. Daniel and Venkatachari, K.K.A., *A Sourcebook of Vaiṣṇava Iconography*, Pancaratra Parisodhana Parisad, Madras, 1969.
- Smith, Daniel, *Descriptive Catalogue of Smith's Āgama collections*,
- Srinivasan, K.R, *Cave Temples of the Pallavas*, Architectural Survey of Temples No 2, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1993 (Reprint).
- Srinivasan, P.R., *Bronzes of South India*, Government Museums, Madras, 1994 (revised edition)
- Soundara Rajan, K.V., *Glimpses of Indian Culture – Architecture, Art and Religion*, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1981.
- Varadachari, V., *Agamas and South Indian Vaisnavism*, Prof. M. Rangacharya Memorial Trust, Madras, 1982.
- Walker, Benjamin, *Hindu world*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1983.

ICONOGRAPHY OF CAṆDEŚA AND VIŚVAKSENA BASED ON ĀGAMAS

R. BALASUBRAMANIAN,
Curator,
Government of Museum, Chennai-8

An image of a deity, with or without a separate shrine, is set up in the northeast corner with reference to the *garbhagrha* of Śiva or Viṣṇu, Skanda, Gajānana and Devi. These deities are generally called as ‘*Nirmālyadhārins*’ as they are the recipients of the garlands offered to the main deities and cast off after *pūja* but before the commencement of next *pūja*. Apart from this, these deities are the chief hosts and guardians of the temples.

Both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava āgamas prescribe the rituals uniformly but with Śiva and Viṣṇu as the supreme deity. The chief of the hosts of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism i.e. Caṇdeśa and Seneśa (Visvaksena) play an important role in all the temple rituals like *Nityotsava* (daily festival), *Mahotsava* (annual festivals) etc., It is said that the devotees are supposed to clasp and report to these deities before leaving the temple to prove that they take nothing away from the premises.

It is very interesting to note that both are iconographically too identical with the main deity. This paper deals with the iconographical aspects of Caṇdeśa and

Viṣvaksena comparatively based on some āgamic treatises¹ of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, one of the Vaiṣṇava sub sects.

Candeśa

A Śaiva devotee named Vicāraśarman disturbed by his father Yajñadatta during worship hit the latter without identifying him. On account of his one-soled devotion, Lord Śiva was pleased and named Vicāraśarman as 'Caṇḍeśa' and appointed him to be chief of hosts of Him.²

The image of Caṇḍeśa is in *madhyamā* or *adhama daśatāla*.³ Caṇḍeśa wears *vyāla-yajñopavīta* (*sarpa-yajñopavīta*). He is adorned with all sorts of ornaments like *karnakuṇḍalas*⁴ (earrings). Normally Caṇḍeśa's appearance is terrible on account of his face where from the fire seems to burst out. Like his master Śiva, he wears *jaṭamakuta* adorned with crescent but the absence of Gaṅga on it differentiates him from the former.

The icon of Caṇḍeśa (Accn.No.448/63) housed in the Government Museum, Chennai, is very unique to have created following the prescriptions of iconography

¹ The study is based on the Śaiva treatises Viz., *Kāmika*, *Kāraṇa*, *Ajita* and *Dīpta* and *Vaiṣṇava āgamas* Viz., *Khilādhikāra*, *Kriyādhikāra* and *Vimānārcanakaḷpa*.

² J.N.Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, p.485.

³ *Kāmika* (Pūrva)- 65.29a:

caṇḍeśvaram tathā madhye daśatālena kārayet/

⁴ *Kāraṇa* (Pūrva).13.94-96:

*caṇḍeśasyākṛtiṃ śṛṇu/
caṇḍī caṇḍīśvaro raktasvetamiśrasca vistaraḥ /
dvibāhussajaṭācūdaśekharaḥ karnakuṇḍalaḥ //
dhṛtayajñopavītaśca śuklāmbaṛadharaśśuciḥ //
sarvābharaṇasambhūsyah ṭaṅkapāṇirathāpi vā/
ardhacandrāsanaśinaḥ puṣpamālā'valambhitah//*

available in *Kāmikāgama* and *Kāraṇāgama* of Siddhānta Śaivism, generally known as Āgama Śaivism.¹

Caṇḍeśa, who is the recipient of 'nirmālya' (remnants) of Śiva, is to be depicted to express the theme. One may find Caṇḍeśa, four-armed or two-armed, in the temples. However, some of the special features noticeable in this icon may not be possible there.

Caṇḍeśa is depicted in *vīrāsana*, with the left leg folded and placed flat on *bhadrapiṭha*. The right leg, with a slight raise at the knee, dangles down and the foot is placed on a small *padmapiṭha*. As such, the upper part of body remains erect (*rju*) rather at ease (*śukhāsana*).

This icon is fashioned in *madhyama daśa-tāla* applicable to subordinate divinities in the next rank of Śiva.² The face is slightly oval. *Jaṭāmakūṭa* measures $\frac{3}{4}$ of the height of the face whereas in the icon of Śiva, it is supposed to be more than the size of the face. *Lalāṭapaṭṭa* above the forehead is beautifully designed. A *patrapurima* is present in the front part of *jaṭāmakūṭa*. A garland (*mālā*) adorning at the base of *jaṭāmakūṭa* reminds one to think of a beautiful sportive form (*līlāmūrti*) of Śiva as

¹ *Kāmika (Uttara).65.22-24, 27b-29a:*

*athavā dvibhujasśuklavastriyakṣo' ṇjanaprabhaḥ /
jaṭāmakūṭayukto vā davalikṛtamūrdhajaḥ /
sthānako vāsanastho vā śayitāsavayapāṭṭalaḥ //
salambasavyapādastu vāmahastabhujānugaḥ /
varahasto'thavā śa syāt itaraṣṭaṅkasamyutaḥ //
vāmetara karaṣṭaṅkayukto'ṇjalipuṭo'thavā //
viśeṣaśirṁhale deśe kascidatrābhidhīyate /
kṛtāyām aṣṭahastasyāt tretāyām śaḍbhujō mataḥ /
dvāpare ca caturhastah kalau tu dvikaro mataḥ /
Anyadeśe tu sarvatra vibhāgo nāyamīritah //*

² *Kāmika (Uttara).65.16b:*

Madhyena daśatālena daśatālādāmena va /

*Kāmika (Uttara).55.4a (In the icon Caṇḍeśānugrahamūrti)
devekṣaṇa samopetaṁ matbhaktam caṇḍanāyakam /
sarvāṅgasundaram kuryāt kaṣṭhadaśatālataḥ //*

Caṇḍeśānugrahamūrti. This description is found in the āgamas.¹ This also informs the nature of Caṇḍeśa as 'nirmāyadhārin'. *Padma* and *mukula* adorn the top of *jaṭāmakuṭa*.² The tresses of *jaṭā* are shown also on the shoulders. *Patra-kunḍalas* adorn the ears.

In this two-armed icon of Caṇḍeśa, the right hand bears *khadga-mudrā* to hold some weapon upright. Following the prescriptions of Āgamas, *ṭanka/paraśu* (battle-axe) must be there as an object of insertion. The left hand bears *āhūya-varada/simhakarṇa* gesture to indicate this divinity in benign (*saumya*) form. A *ratnavalaya* at the wrist and *keyūra* with *patrapurima* at the middle of upper arm (*bāhu-madhyā*) beautify the hands. A *kañṭhī* and a single-threaded *yajñopavīta* are noticeable. A beautiful *udarabandha* is placed just above the naval.

The garments (*vastra*) is shown only upto middle of the thighs as in the case of his master Śiva. *Kaṭibandha* with beautiful *krtrimavaktra* (face of *vyāla* rather lion), a simple thread like *uttariya* adorns the garments. *Pāda-kaṭaka*, a symbol of warrior, present just below the ankle indicates Caṇḍeśa's nature as 'Chieftain of *gaṇas*' of Śiva.

This type of *Bhadrapīṭha* is meant for high grade divinities especially for Śiva, the Supreme One in Śaivism. This type of pedestal can be noticed in the icons of Śomāskanda (Tiruvelangadau, Kakkarai and Nidur), Śukhāsana (Thanjavur) and Viṣāpaharaṇa (Kilappudanur) and so on. The *pīṭha* consists of the components: *upāna*, *jagatī*, *kumuda*, *kampa*, *kañṭha* with *pāda* design, *kampa*, *padmavājana* and *ūrdhvapaṭṭī*.

¹ *Kāmika (Uttara)*.55.5b:

devaśśirasi caṇḍasya mālāyā pariveṣṭayet /

² *Jaṭāmakuṭa* of Śiva should be adorned with *padma* and *mukula* on the top. In case of Brahmā and Ṛṣis, *Jaṭāmakuṭa* does not have this feature. As such it is known as *udbaddha-kuntala*.

Viṣvaksena (Seneśa)

Viṣvaksena, also known as Amita, Śānta, Seneśa and Hariseneśa¹, occupies a very important place in the Viṣṇu temples as well as *Vaiṣṇava* religion. He is dearer to Viṣṇu, states Bhṛṅgu². He is one amongst the group of deities called *anādi-vaiṣṇava*³. His emblem of *dhvaja* is the mountain-peak (*śṛiṅga*).

In *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*,⁴ Viṣvaksena is depicted different forms. In all four-armed forms, the upper hands hold *cakra* and *śaṅkha* on the backhands. The front hands may bear the pair of *abhaya-katyavalambita*, *abhaya-gadā*, *abhaya-varada* or *varada-gadā*. Viṣvaksena, fashioned in *navatāla* measure, must be depicted seated on *śimhāsana* with his right leg folded to rest on the seat and the left one hanging down. He is bright in complexion of red or like fire and is clothed in the colour of yellow or *śyāma*. This four-armed one holds the attributes viz. *cakra*, *śaṅkha* and *gadā* with the fourth hand being in *varada* gesture. He is adorned with *kirīṭa* and all sorts of ornaments like *keyūra* and *hāra* applicable to Viṣṇu. He resembles Viṣṇu in all sorts of physical aspects and ornaments except *Śrīvatsa* and *Pralamba-brahmasūtra*.

It is to be noted that the *tarjanī-mudrā* is mentioned in in *Pāñcarātra* texts only. In *Vaikhānasa* treatises, he is benign but in *Pāñcarātra* treatises, he is both benign and depicted with terrible countenances with curved eyebrows and protruding teeth (*daṁṣṭrā*)⁵.

The present icon of Viṣvaksena (Accn.No. 65/40) of Government Museum, Chennai tallies with the prescriptions of *Pāñcarātra āgamas* especially *Pādma Saṁhita*.⁶ The icons of

¹ SAA.44.60b.

² KLA.15.224b.

³ KRA.29.181.

⁴ KJK.49 p.86, 50 p.87; KLA.15.52b-54a; KRA.5.161b; SAA.21.19b; VAI.19 p.60; YAJ.21 (etc) p.89.

⁵ *Īśvara saṁhita*. 17.123-126.

⁶ *Pādma (Kriyā)*: 22.36-38.

*viṣvaksenaṁ caturbāhuṁ śyāmavarmaṁ kirīṭinam /
lambodaraṁ ca mukhyeṇa kareṇābhaya-dāyinaṁ //
dakṣiṇeṇa prasavyeṇa samālambya kaṭīm sthitaṁ /
āśinamaparābhyāṁ ca hastābhyāṁ śaṅkhacakraṇam //
athavā pūrvakarayorgadāmekatra kalpayet /*

Viṣvaksena with *tarjanī-mudrā* in the lower right hand are found invariably in the Viṣṇu temples irrespective of mode of worship i.e. Vaikhānasa or Pāñcarātra.

This icon of Viṣvaksena is seen seated on a double padmāsana over a square bhadrāsana with four hands. His kirīṭa makuṭa is fashioned in an elongated manner with a knob at the top. His face is rounder with eyes and brows pronounced. He is having makra-kundalas in his ears. Shoulder tassels are shown on both his shoulders. The fingers holding the cakra are broken and lost. Hence features of the cakra are not available for study. The sankha on the upper left hand has three flames and is held between two fingers. The ring finger of the upper left hand is pointing outward. The lower right hand is portrayed in abhaya with his middle finger pointing up. The lower left hand is holding the base of the gada in up turned palm. The bulbous portion of the gada is placed straight on the third rim of the bhadrasana. He has two rows of necklaces and the yajnopavita is in three strands of which two strands goes through the body. His udarabandha is beautifully fashioned and is placed above the naval. He has valayas in his forehands. His pītāmbara is fashioned with frills. His left leg is folded and kept cross on the padmāsana while his right leg is hanging down with the sole kept on the lower rim of the padmāsana. Normally a separate pīṭha (foot rest) will be made and added to keep the feet. Looking at the back of the icon the kirita is beautifully fashioned. The makra is also beautifully worked and placed at the base of the kirita makuta with festoons issuing from the lower portion which adds beauty to the icon. The sashes are beautifully worked and the ends are placed on the padmasana. The hands are beautifully parted at the elbow and muscles are clearly shown. Datable to about 16th Century AD.

**VAIṢṆAVA ĀGAMAS AND VIṢṆU IMAGES
IN
THE GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, CHENNAI**

The Thesis submitted to
University of Madras

For the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
R. Balasubramanian, M.A.
(Part-Time)

Under the guidance and Supervision of
Dr. S. Muthu, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D.
Reader in Sanskrit



Department of Sanskrit
Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College
(Autonomous)
Chennai – 600 004

August 2011

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

7.1 Value of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* in identification of icons of Viṣṇu and iconographical details

In modern days, it is the high task to study and analyse the temples and icons therein just following the treatises of one branch alone, either *Pāñcarātra* or *Vaikhānasa*. It is well-observed, "Many of the temples of Viṣṇu, currently following *Vaikhānasa* or *Pāñcarātra* system, cannot be exactly classified (except in some cases supported with epigraphy) under either of the two categories for, no support is available to trace out whether they were originally following *Vaikhānasa* or *Pāñcarātra* system. In most of the temples, the system had changed almost right from 10th century AD, obviously for want of the priests (*pūjakas* / *arcakas*), ... Therefore, the survey is based on the iconographical details alone irrespective of the worshipping system prevalent there at present."¹

The *Āgamas* in general and *śilpa-śāstra* always insist on an important aspect i.e. combination of *ācārya* (preceptor), *śilpin* (sculptor/architect) and *yajamāna* (donor), for the best result of creating a temple or icon to be installed therein. A number of donors (*yajamāna*) and kings had lived a good life and they had contributed for the development of the temples. The temples remain but the residences of the donors are not available. The reason behind this is that they had not extended the care they have taken for the temples to the residential complexes.

The *Āgamas* focus on the iconic worship, Hence, they have to detail every aspect for the best production of icons and temples. Undoubtedly, *śilpa-śāstra* is a canonical guide for the same. The *Āgamas* insist on following the instructions of the *śilpa-śāstra* but with some special attention and special care

¹ K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.373-374.

in this regard. The *Āgamas* reiterate certain points so that the forthcoming generations do not violate the rules and regulations by the way of reasoning.

The *Āgamas* do not speak of anything new but whatever existed and practiced during the time of their compilations. On the other hand, they presented the same theme in modified manner to appeal to public. Certain cults and practices of different regions have to be accommodated in the changing time and on account of cultural and political transitions and transactions. For instance, the icons of *Māṭrkās* (*Sapta-māṭrkā* or *aṣṭa-māṭrkā*) and *Jyeṣṭhā*, unknown or less-known to the Tamil region, became prominent in the 6th century AD and this is proved by a number of monuments (rock-cuts and structural temples). The *Āgamic* tradition did not oppose this but accommodated in the temple premises as sub-ordinate deities. In the same way, one can notice in the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* the sanction of Trimūrti worship. However, this cult could not retain its status for more than two centuries, probably, due to change in religious and political conditions.

The prescriptions of the *Āgamas* were valued almost right from the early days, either in construction of the temple or creation of icons. The trend enabled the development of a number of creative forms in the field of art and architecture. However, the reason behind the same is not explored. For instance, the *Āgamas* prescribe that deity should not face the southern side. The *Ādivarāha* rock-cut cave temple (*Pārameśvara mahāvarāha-viṣṇu-grha*) at Mamallapuram faces the west. Therefore, the icon of *Varāha* is depicted with the head turned towards the north and, hence, holds *Bhūdevi* on the right side. In Tiruvidaventai, a place near Mamallapuram, the temple faces east, hence, *Varāha* is depicted with the face turned to north. When Tirumangai Ālvār visited, for the first time, he praised the Lord as '*tiru iḍa entai*' meaning 'Lord holding Śrī on the left side' in his hymn called *Periya Tirumoli*. However, the *Puraṇas* and other literature speak of *Varāha* carrying *Bhūdevi* but not *Śrīdevi*. Undoubtedly, the sculptors had followed the prescription of *Āgamas*, and, thus, gradually the rules became normal practice.

The *Vaikhānasa* and the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* differ from one another in some details in the field of iconography especially the icons. Both of them have descriptions of some unique icons of Viṣṇu and other divinities. For instance, the icon of Hayagrīva detailed in *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* do not get mention in the *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*. In the same way, Mānuṣa-Vāsudeva has special mention in the *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*, for which, the best examples are the temples at Tiruvalikkeni (Pārthasārathi temple) and Tirunariyur (Nacchiyar Koyil near Kumbakonam). This is probably on account of some practices in some places.

There are number of similarities between them where both the traditions have been followed by the sculptors. For instance, the *dhruva-bera* should be in *uttama-daśātāla* in the form of four-armed Viṣṇu/Vāsudeva. In case, the temple is dedicated to Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and *Pañcavīra* (Mānuṣa-vāsudeva), the *kautuka-bera* or *dhruva-bera* must be four-armed Viṣṇu. A brief survey of this aspect in some of the temples testifies for the meticulous adherence to the *Āgamic* principles.

- a. In the temple at Tirunaraiyur (Mānuṣa-vāsudeva), the *dhruva-bera* is two-armed. Therefore, the *kautuka/utsava-bera* is four-armed Viṣṇu.
- b. In the temple at Tiruvallikkeni (Mānuṣa-vāsudeva), the *dhruva-bera* is two-armed. Therefore, the *kautuka/utsava-bera* is four-armed Viṣṇu.
- c. In the Kodandarāma (Tiru Ayodhyā Perumāl) temple at Madhurantakam (*Madhurāntaka cāturdvedimangalam*), both *dhruva-bera* and *utsava-beras* are two-armed Rāma in *madhyamā-daśātāla*. Therefore, the *kautuka-bera* is four-armed Viṣṇu.
- d. In the Viranārayaṇa Perumāl temple (*Viranārāyaṇa Viṇṇagaram*) at Kattumannargudi (near Chidambaram), the *utsava-bera* is two-armed Sāyudha Kṛṣṇa but the *dhruva-bera* and *kautuka-bera* are four-armed Vāsudeva.

e. In the Rājagopālasvāmi temple at Mannargudi (near Tanjavur), the *utsava-bera* is two-armed Sāyudha Kṛṣṇa but the *dhruva-bera* is four-armed Vāsudeva.

f. In the temple at Uttukakadu (late medieval) near Tanjore, the *utsava-bera* is Kāliya-nartana Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the *dhruva-bera* is four-armed Vāsudeva.

In the above places ranging from the period prior to 8th century AD to 14th Century AD, either *Pāñcarātra* or *Vaikhānasa*, general prescriptions are uniformly adhered to. This proves that the *śilpins/sthapatis* were in a position to follow whatever the *śilpa-śāstra* and *Āgamas* prescribe in particular period. The sculptors had followed some common prescriptions of the *Āgamas* irrespective of the system of worship in the temples.

Some of the icons housed in the Government Museum, Chennai, stand as the best examples for the amalgamation of the principles of *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra* *Āgamas*. *Urassūtra*, known as also *pralamba-sutra*, gets special mention the *Vaikhānasa* works. The *Pāñcarātra* texts speak of this *sūtra* but do not give details. Kriyādhikāra¹ adds an anecdote² to justify the position of this *sūtra*. As per this text, this *sūtra* should run from the right breast (from fastening), should run in the middle of body and should be extended upto left ankle. The description itself is complicated. This is applicable to the seated (*āsīna*) icon of Viṣṇu. The icons studied here are matching to *Vaikhānasa* *Āgama* details but do not have the *sūtra* this way but the *sūtra* is shown running inside the *kaṭibandha* and *pīṭambara*. On the other hand, in the seated icons of Viṣṇu (Accn. Nos.5-01, 17, 459/61 and 554/66) considered to be of *Pāñcarātra* based on the four attributes *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *gadā* and *padma*, this *sūtra* is shown beautifully appearing above the left leg folded and placed flat on the pedestal. In the same way, many ornaments are used in the icons irrespective of the tradition of worship they belong to.

¹ KRA.5.158-161

² Vide. Terminology.

A number of iconographers and art-historians had pioneered in the field of Indian icons and they had tried their level best to identify the icons with the support of the material (epigraphical and textual) whatever available during their time. With the support of a number of *Āgamic* treatises (published and unpublished), some of the icons can be accurately identified. This is possible only with the help of the treatises of *Āgamas* in collaboration with *śilpa* texts of the particular region. For instance, the details found in *Aparājita-prccha* or *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhara* are meant for mainly the temples and icons available in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and some of the regions in northern belt. The details in *Pāñcarātra Āgama* can be taken for the study of icons throughout India. The *Vaikhānasa Āgamic* details tally with the icons and temples almost on the southern side of river Godāvarī.

As such, the icon of one divinity i.e. Viṣvaksena in particular, deserve mention here in connection with its accurate identification. A seated icon of Viṣvaksena from Kulittalai, Trichy District (Accn. No.65/40) has been identified as Viṣṇu. Because, the *Āgamas* mention that Viṣvaksena is identical with Viṣṇu but without Śrīvatsa and *pralamba-sūtra*. In this icon, one can find the *pralamba-sūtra*, invariably mentioned also as *urassūtra*. Absence of Śrīvatsa can not be taken as main criteria, because Śrīvatsa is not shown in some icons of Viṣṇu. The unique



Fig.99. Viṣvaksena, Accn. No.65/40

feature in this icon is *tarjanī-mudrā*, as applicable to Viṣvaksena as described in *Pāñcarātra* texts.¹

Another interesting icon from Chimakurti, Andhra Pradesh (Accn. No.18) housed in the Government Museum, Chennai, requires textual evidence of *Vaiṣṇava Āgama*. This icon identified as Viṣṇu is indeed not Viṣṇu but incarnation of Viṣṇu i.e. Rāma. In this icon seated in *vīrāsana*, obviously *matsyāsana*, the right hand bears *jñāna-mudrā*² and the left hand is placed on the knee. This icon matches with the description of Rāma found in *Vāyu saṁhitā*³ of *Pāñcarātra Āgama*. This icon is supposed to be flanked with that of Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and so on.



Fig.100. Rāma, Accn. No.18

¹ *Pādma (Kriyā)*.22.37a-38:

āśinamaparābhyāṁ ca hastābhyāṁ śaṅkhacakraṇam //
athavā pūrvakarayorgadāmekatra kalpayet /
anyatra tarjanīmudrāṁ yadvā dakṣiṇahastayoḥ //

² K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan, *op. cit.*, p.41.

³ *Jñāna-mudrā*, known as also *sandarśa-mudrā* and *tattva-mudrā*, is almost identical with *cin-mudrā* but held near the heart in which the palm of the hand remains turned towards the heart². This gesture must be ½ *aṅgulas* above the level of the breast-nut; and the middle line (*madhyama-rekhā*) of the palm must be at the distance of 20 to 23 *aṅgulas* from navel (*nābhī*)."

³ *Vāyu.2.* (Mss. Cf. Smith, Daniel, *op. cit.*, p.150):

atha dhyānamahaṁ vakṣye rāmasyādbhutakarmanah /
kālameghasamacchāyaṁ vīrāsanāsamānvitam //
dakṣahastāgravilasajjñānamudrābhiśobhitam /
vāmajānukaṭṭhinyastavāmapāṇivirājitam //

7.2 Need of Āgamic study for replacement of displaced icons of Viṣṇu

A number of icons have been shifted to other places by way of theft and robbery. In past centuries, when India faced a number of invasions, wars and battles, a number of temples had been razed to earth and the materials housed in the temple premises had been looted. This had happened almost right from 12th century AD. Some of the manuals like *Koyil Oḷugu* (*Chronicles of Srirangam Temple*) and *Tirumalai Oḷugu* (*Manual of Tirumala Temple*) give the detailed information. During this time, even the icons had been changed to other places. That is why, in some temples like Kanchipuram (Varadarāja Perumāl temple) and Melkote (Seluvanārāyaṇasvāmi temple), both Śrīdevi and Bhūdevi are identical and both of them hold flower in the right hand and their left hand is *dola-hasta*.

All icons of Viṣṇu need not be taken as belonging to Viṣṇu temples only. In many Śiva temples, the icon of Viṣṇu is housed and worshipped as *parivāra-devatā*. This poses a main problem regarding the identification of the icons of Viṣṇu. A careful iconometric study, based on the Āgamas, can solve the problem. The icon of Viṣṇu in the Viṣṇu temple is fashioned in *uttama-daśa-tāla* whereas the same as *parivāra-devatā* in Śiva temple must be fashioned in *madhyamā-daśa-tāla* or *kaniṣṭha-daśa-tāla*. Besides the icon, the pedestal of icon also plays important role to assign the icon to the proper temple.

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* mention five or six types of icons of Viṣṇu to be installed and consecrated in the sanctum sanctorum. The grade of the temple depends on the availability of icons in the temple. Besides the regional variations, each temple and the icon therein is created based on one text of any of the two traditions of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*. Generally, all types of icons in the sanctum sanctorum (*garbha-grha*) resemble others to some extent, iconographically or iconometrically. The temple and the icon are interrelated for the size and features. This subtle theme could be understood only by the extensive survey of temples with the support of Āgamic treatises.

7.3. Further scope of study of Āgamic treatises

The present research work deals with some select standing and seated icons of Viṣṇu housed in the Government Museum, Chennai. There are more icons in this category in addition to other forms of Viṣṇu which require a detailed study.

The icons can be studied thoroughly from the view point of detailed iconometric mode i.e. to analyse the dimensions and measurements in detail including the minute aspects. This is possible only through the proper analytical study of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*. Yet a number of *Vaiṣṇava Āgamic* treatises are available in the manuscripts in different localities in the custody of temple priests and *Maṭhas* but many of them in the condition of deterioration due to improper care on account of financial paucity as well as the scarcity of scholars who can read and write some of the important scripts like Grantha, Telugu and so on. Moreover, the study of Indian temple architecture and art requires sound and analytical knowledge in Sanskrit and practical knowledge in the field of temple architecture and iconography. For this, an extensive survey of monuments (museums and temples *in situ*) has to be undertaken to decipher and decode what the *Āgamas* contain. Thus, the study of *Āgamas* and the survey of monuments are complement to one another.